Visions of Empire

Gaze, Space, and Territory in Isidore's Encomium for John VIII Palaiologos

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Introduction

As markers of boundaries, or the lack thereof, representations of spaces often give us clues about identities, values, and mobility. By activating symbols and unveiling profiles, the study of space opens new prospects for our understanding of social, political, and cultural signs inherited from the past. Spaces are constantly permeated by beliefs and attitudes. They can be either beneficial or hostile, a factor of cohesion or, on the contrary, of dispersion. Moreover, the perception and the documentation of spaces turn out to be useful for the examination of narrative strategy because they have the capacity to induce a certain order within a chain of events. In other words, space can also become part of the textual fabric.

When used in literary or rhetorical compositions, representations of spaces assume many forms. If we set aside the spatial descriptions in the Byzantine geographical and didactic texts,[1] we notice that especially in narrative accounts (histories, chronicles, romances, or hagiography), space and time constitute major vectors of plot development.[2] Even genres with little or no

narrative from Byzantium are prone to describe objects and physical settings, especially urban ones.[3] Likewise, many rhetorical texts in verse or prose, despite their tendency to deal with abstract concepts, also include descriptions of spaces. Occasionally, the imperial orations characterize individuals as virtuous through a narration of action that involves extension in time and space.[4] This paper will explore the spatial thinking and correlative rhetorical design embedded in one such imperial oration penned by Isidore (ca. 1380–1463), known also as Metropolitan of Kiev, a scholar, ecclesiastic, and imperial scribe living in the first half of the fifteenth century.[5] His *Encomium for John VIII*, emperor

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1   A discussion of the implications of space and geographical thinking in Byzantine context appears in P. Magdalino, "Constantine VII and the Historical Geography of Empire," in *Imperial Geographies in Byzantine and Ottoman Space*, ed. D. Angelov and Y. Batsaki, Hellenic Studies 56 (Washington, DC, 2013), 23–41.

2   M. Mullett explores the literary and rhetorical exploitation of travel and space in "In Peril on the Sea: Travel Genres and the

Unexpected," in *Travel in the Byzantine World*, ed. R. Macrides (Aldershot, 2002), 259–74. The importance of space in the construction of narratives was pointed out by Irene de Jong in the introduction to *Space in Ancient Greek Literature: Studies in Ancient Greek Narrative*, ed. I. de Jong (Leiden, 2012), 11–13. On the use of space in Byzantine narratives see P. Agapitos, "Dreams and the Spatial Aesthetics of Narrative Presentation in *Livistros and Rhodamne*," *DOP* 53 (1999): 111–47.

3   This is especially the case with *ekphraseis* and self-standing urban encomia, a highly popular genre especially in late antiquity and the late period. See E. Fenster, *Laudes Constantinopolitanae* (Munich, 1968) and H. Saradi, *The Byzantine City in the Sixth Century: Literary Images and Historical Reality* (Athens, 2006).

4   This occurs especially in the sections dedicated to the pursuits and the deeds (πράξεις and ἐπιτηδεύματα) of the ruler.

5   *PLP* 8300. On Isidore's life and scholarly and diplomatic activity see G. Mercati, *Scritti d'Isidoro il cardinal ruteno* (Rome, 1926); V. Laurent, "Isidore de Kiev et la metropole de Monembasie," *REB* 17

of the Byzantines between 1425 and 1448,[6] devotes much of its content to the description of spaces, in particular, the urban area of Constantinople and the provinces of Peloponnese and continental Greece. I argue that space represents a core component of the author's strategy to mediate between the necessity to praise and the intention to construct discursively a symbolic reality that would reflect the challenges of a collapsing state. Concurrently, I suggest that, as a self-standing symbol, space corresponded to a different vision of imperial Byzantine authority and of Byzantine encomiastic writing. Thus, by turning space into a tool for imperial praise and not using it as a mere ornament,[7] Isidore confronted the empire's new territoriality, a city-centric mindset that emphasized Constantinople's preeminence as well as its self-sufficiency.

Although previous interpretations of Isidore's panegyric have focused on the use of narrative,[8] I believe that narrative can only partly explain the construction of this speech, and view the use of spatial representations as key to understanding the compositional organization of the oration. Such a study of the rhetorical perceptions of space can provide insights into late Byzantine attitudes as well as into developments specific to Byzantine rhetoric.[9] In recent years, elements of performance and the evidence they provide for notions of social mobility have been highlighted. Doubtless, the *theatra* (including the gestures, the moments, and the manner of the speech involved in the public delivery of texts) played a major role in the circulation of social

and symbolic capital.[10] Other studies have pointed out the factual information which late Byzantine speeches and especially Isidore's panegyric reveal about Constantinopolitan topography and the imperial campaigns of the first decades of the fifteenth century.[11] Although at first sight rhetorical orations seem to provide meager evidence for the physical environment and historical events, nonetheless texts like Isidore's offer the possibility of exploring modes of constructing, experiencing, and conceptualizing the relationship between abstract symbolical space, individuals, and particular historical circumstances. By and large, rhetoricians, unlike historians, shifted from an objective space to a symbolic one. Furthermore, rhetorical orations offer a combination of techniques producing notable verbal or oral effects as well as striking images often underpinned by spatial representations. Finally, if we look at the particular historical age, it appears that spatial representations can also elucidate developments in Palaiologan history, as they can illustrate the short-term goals of John VIII and of his father, Manuel II. Both emperors aimed at preserving a minimal territorial extension essential for the survival of the empire during its last decades of existence.

In an attempt to identify the function of spatial representations in Isidore's encomium, this paper will have several sections. After a few remarks on the text and the methodological implications of the study of space, I will explore Isidore's ideas of visualization and gaze. Then I will identify the types of space which Isidore developed in the oration, and finally, I will highlight their value at the rhetorical and the symbolic level.

The Text

As a member of the scholarly circle formed around the emperor Manuel II, the author of the encomium, Isidore, had a career closely intertwined with the life of the

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(1959): 150–57; D. A. Zakythinos, "Μανουὴλ Β′ ὁ Παλαιολόγος καί ὁ καρδινάλιος Ἰσίδωρος ἐν Πελοποννήσῳ," in *Mélanges offerts à Octave et Melpo Merlier* (Athens, 1957), 45–69; and P. Schreiner, "Literarische Interessen in der Palaiologenzeit," in *Geschichte und Kultur der Palaiologenzeit*, ed. W. Seibt (Vienna, 1996), 205–20.

6   S. Lampros, *Παλαιολόγεια καὶ Πελοποννησιακά*, vol. 3 (Athens, 1926), 132–99. All citations will refer to this edition. Translations are mine.

7   For the distinction between space as a functional versus an ornamental element in the construction of Byzantine texts see I. Nilsson, *Raconter Byzance: La littérature au XIIᵉ siècle* (Paris, 2014), 158.

8   In line with other scholars of Palaiologan rhetoric, Schmitt ("Kaiserrede") deals extensively with the intertextual dialogue between panegyric and chronicles; yet, at the same time, he overlooks the role of the embedded *laus Constantinopolitana*.

9   In this context, I. Nilsson rightly argued that the study of themes and motifs (like space) can be more useful than the study of genres and forms; *Raconter Byzance*, 208.

10   I. Toth, "Rhetorical Theatron in Late Byzantium: The Example of Palaiologan Imperial Orations," in *Theatron: Rhetorische Kultur in Spätantike und Mittelalter*, ed. M. Grünbart (Berlin, 2007), 429–48 and N. Gaul, "Schauplätze der Macht" in *Thomas Magistros und die spätbyzantinische Sophistik* (Wiesbaden, 2011), 17–61.

11   Schmitt, "Kaiserrede," 234; Lampros, *Παλαιολόγεια καὶ Πελοποννησιακά*, 3:4–15; and M. Philippides, *The Siege and the Fall of Constantinople in 1453* (Farnham, 2011), 305.

ruling family of the Palaiologoi.[12] A close friend of the emperor and occasional diplomatic envoy, he witnessed several of the most dramatic events of the early fifteenth century, especially the accelerated fragmentation of the empire. Isidore authored both letters and rhetorical orations which testify to his sophisticated education.[13] His *Encomium for Emperor John VIII*, composed in 1429,[14] is by far the most extensive encomiastic speech of the Palaiologan period (1261–1453).[15] Central to the encomium is the contrast between the harmonious order of the enclosed space of Constantinople and the turbulence prevailing in the open provinces of continental Greece. Isidore alternates images of peace with praise for imperial virtues, and accounts of military action conducted by the emperors John and his father Manuel. Ida Toth has recently suggested that the author may have sought to draw the emperor's attention to Morea and to support his own promotion from Monemvasia to Constantinople as abbot of a monastery.[16] As noted by Spyridon Lampros,[17] Isidore includes an unusual amount of historical and geographical detail, which increases the encomium's authenticity and credibility and suggests that imperial praise was not the text's only purpose. Preserved in one manuscript (Vat. 226), Isidore's encomium presents a standard structure that includes:

1. a prologue with the author's remarks on the difficulty of the task to praise the emperor and on the centrality of vision in understanding the imperial glory (132.1–136.12);

2. a description of the city of Constantinople, not only as the imperial *patris* (fatherland) but also as a perfect urban dwelling organized by various sections and providing shelter for a community of free citizens (136.13–154.31);

3. an account of the ruling family, with a long excursus about the military deeds of John's father, who recovered lost territories and reinforced Byzantium's defense (154.32–157.22);

4. an account of Emperor John's deeds in various Byzantine provinces; comparisons with ancient rulers, especially Alexander the Great; the account is divided according to the four cardinal virtues (157.23–166.18);

5. praise for the various intellectual and physical virtues of John VIII and an account of other deeds (166.19–198.27);

6. an epilogue announcing the rise of Emperor John to glory (198.28–199.30).

This structure follows the standard division of panegyrics and serves the goal of praising an emperor.[18] Furthermore, it abides by Menander Rhetor's rule of discussing the four cardinal imperial virtues (courage, prudence, justice, and temperance), a key element in justifying the emperor's position of authority.[19] Yet, like other panegyrists, Isidore expands only a few compositional units,[20] and given his compositional innovations, he should be regarded as an independent interpreter of events and situations rather than as simply a writer commissioned by the imperial court to broadcast official propaganda. We can assume that, given his close connections with the imperial family, Isidore had the freedom to conceive his encomium in a way that would unveil other meanings in addition to praise. Isidore's personal touch becomes visible in two major textual

12   *PLP* 8300. He helped the emperor in copying and circulating some of his works. J. Chrysostomides, "Introduction," *Manuel II: Funeral Oration for His Brother Theodore, Despot of Morea* (Thessalonike, 1985), 29. On his literary activity see M. Philippides, "The Fall of Constantinople 1453: Classical Comparisons and the Circle of Cardinal Isidore," *Viator* 36 (2007): 376–83.

13   Recently, I. Polemis also suggested that another anonymously preserved panegyric addressed to Manuel could have been composed by Isidore, "Two Praises of the Emperor Manuel II Palaiologos: Problems of Authorship," *BZ* 103 (2011): 705. Several letters by Isidore were edited by W. Regel, *Analecta Byzantino-Rossica* (St. Petersburg, 1891).

14   On the date of the text see Schmitt, "Kaiserrede," 241–42.

15   S. Lampros's edition, which covers seventy pages, was based on one manuscript. The length of the speech is comparable only with that of the contemporary *Funeral Oration for Theodore* by Manuel II (1407).

16   I. Toth, "Imperial Orations in Late Byzantium (1261–1453)" (Ph.D. diss., University of Oxford, 2003), 161.

17   Spyridon Lampros and, more recently, Oliver Jens Schmitt investigated the historical character of his encomium (Lampros, *Παλαιολόγεια καὶ Πελοποννησιακά*, 3:4–33 and Schmitt, "Kaiserrede," 212). Both insisted on the unique historical information preserved in the text without however going much into detail about its construction or authorial strategies. See also, Toth, "Imperial Orations," 160.

18   Isidore always marks his transitions from one section to another (e.g., 157.23–26) or by repeatedly referring to the *law of panegyric* (νόμος ἐγκωμίων).

19   Menander Rhetor 373.5–8.

20   The strategy of expanding only several sections was also noticed by Lampros (*Παλαιολόγεια καὶ Πελοποννησιακά* 3:4) and Schmitt ("Kaiserrede," 215).

features: a lengthy praise of Constantinople (almost a third of the entire oration) and a detailed account of Manuel II's virtues and deeds. Remarkably, the presentation of the dedicatee, the emperor John VIII, takes limited room compared to the extent of the oration, as many passages overlook him, most conspicuously the description of Constantinople. This kind of thematic distribution raises the question of whether the speech was exclusively dedicated to the emperor or whether it was intended to convey other ideas as well. As a matter of fact, the text can be read as a triple panegyric where multiple layers intersect and reinforce each other: the praise and description of the capital city, the praise for the fatherly figure of Manuel II, and the overarching eulogy of the dedicatee, John VIII.

Thus, the speech is scarcely a conventional imperial oration, as the praise for the dedicatee undergoes several extensive interruptions and delays. This constitutes a major twist in the genre of late Byzantine imperial orations, for whereas contemporary panegyrics tended to explicitly delineate imperial virtues,[21] the author weaves several rhetorical devices in the text: contrasting images, narrative vignettes, and authorial interventions guiding the listener.[22] Large descriptive and narrative sequences appear within the imperial proclamations. Often, the sequences are introduced by rhetorical questions that establish a direct contact with the audience, as when Isidore transitions to the praise of Emperor John.[23]

The speech thus progresses to its final eulogy less by means of direct praise and more through a series of themes and examples which provide an additional layer to the praise. Clearly, the panegyrist's focus is not on the emperor's attributes, as in other encomia, but on his or others' deeds, accomplishments, and circumstances. Underpinning this focus is the use of the terminology concerning senses like seeing and hearing which evoke sensory responses.[24] The tendency to create sensory-infused descriptions dominates the entire oration. As will be shown, the audience is constantly invited to look

at the city, to consider its physical urban magnificence, and to imagine a ruler active on the battlefield. This aesthetic dimension of a text with an abundant imagery is the main aspect that reinforces the themes of the oration and guides the listener through its different sections to the praise addressed to John.

Compared to other similar orations, Isidore's encomium adds considerably to our knowledge of events in the last years of Byzantium, as discussed by Oliver Jens Schmitt in his 1999 comprehensive article on the historical information of the oration. The panegyric abounds in accounts of imperial actions. Isidore relates the Battle of Nicopolis, which saw the strengthening of Ottoman regional power (1396);[25] the long Ottoman siege of Constantinople (1394–1402);[26] the famous journey of Manuel II in the West (1399–1403);[27] the expeditions of recovering territories in Morea and Thessaly after the Battle of Ankara (1402), which saw the temporary decline of the Ottomans;[28] and the siege of Constantinople (1422).[29] It also furnishes evidence for the conditions in the Byzantine provinces and the detachment of Thessaly and the Peloponnese from the capital.[30] Other sections inform us about John's actions: his diplomatic journey to Western Europe,[31] the military campaign of 1417,[32] and the ousting of Carlo Tocco in 1428.[33] Isidore also includes details about the local history of Thessalonike and Epirus.[34]

Arguably, the ideological objective of the oration is to shift attention away from the emperor to the life of the community. The descriptive and the narrative features as well as the appeals to collective freedom increase the gap between Isidore's approach and that of other contemporaries. Interestingly, the author emphasizes the similarities between Greeks and Latins by noting the Roman past of Byzantium and expressing the idea of a unified community of *Rhomhellenes*.[35]

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21   See especially the oration by John Chortasmenos addressed to Emperor Manuel (217–26, ed. H. Hunger), and Demetrios Chrysoloras's *Comparison between the Ancient Emperors and the New Emperor*, 222–45, ed. Lampros, Παλαιολόγεια καὶ Πελοποννησιακά, vol. 3.

22   See below.

23   Isidore, *Encomium*, 154.32–155.4 (Lampros ed.).

24   See the following section.

25   Isidore, *Encomium*, 159.28–160.24.

26   Isidore, *Encomium*, 158.3–159.28.

27   Isidore, *Encomium*, 162.16.

28   Isidore, *Encomium*, 164.3–164.22.

29   Isidore, *Encomium*, 176.19–178.17.

30   Isidore, *Encomium*, 165.26–166.6.

31   Isidore, *Encomium*, 178.18–179.19.

32   Isidore, *Encomium*, 174.10–176.18.

33   Isidore, *Encomium*, 194.7–197.17.

34   Isidore, *Encomium*, 173.10–174.9 and 194.7–195.7.

35   Isidore, *Encomium*, 152.17.

More importantly, there is a sense of ambiguity in the presentation of John's profile. Surely, his virtues are firmly set in place and the stock comparisons with ancient rulers are present, yet it is only by the end of the oration that the author predicts the rise of the emperor. John appears as a rather fragile young ruler whose successes against a regional leader are not very significant since his main enemy, Carlo Tocco (1411–1429), managed to hold him off for a time.[36] Isidore is also interested in underlining the succession to Manuel II, a nod to the dynastic problems encountered by the latter.[37] The extended comparison with his father puts John on an equal level with Manuel, not a superior one.

Certainly, Isidore's encomium did not appear in a void, and many of its features reflect the contemporary literary milieu, which produced a substantial number of panegyrics and speeches addressed to emperors.[38] Alongside the late Byzantine oratory which Isidore seemed to follow,[39] another trend deserves to be mentioned at this point. Despite a lack of works of geographical imagination or travelogues in late Byzantium,[40] city encomia became popular again in the fourteenth and the fifteenth centuries. The many surviving examples of such texts attest to a burgeoning interest in urban spaces. Beginning with Theodore Laskaris's *Nicaea*,[41] and continuing with Theodore Metochites (*Constantinople* and *Nicaea*),[42] Georgios Karbones (*Constantinople*),[43] John

Eugenikos (*Corinth, Petrina*),[44] Bessarion (*Trebizond*),[45] or Manuel Chrysoloras (*Comparison of Ancient and New Rome*).[46] In addition, other texts like Joseph Bryennios's *Admonitory Oration on the Reconstruction of Constantinople*,[47] historicizing accounts focused on cities like the *encomium* on St. Demetrios by Symeon of Thessalonike,[48] or the siege accounts by Anagnostes[49] and Kananos[50] also engage heavily with images of cities.

Still, with its multiple layers, Isidore's text remains a unique instance of how a laudatory framework could do more than praise. Late Palaiologan imperial orations were generally much shorter and connected to specific events. A recently edited anonymous eulogy dated to the early fifteenth century reacted to the emperor's return from an expedition,[51] and, likewise, John Chortasmenos's encomium for the emperor; Demetrios Chrysoloras drew on a comparison between emperors of today and of the past while Manuel II praised his father, John V, on his recovery from an illness. By contrast, Isidore's encomium has a broader scope and does not respond to a single event or individual feature pertaining to the *laudandus* (object of praise). Instead, it combines various strands, most conspicuously historical narrative and ekphrasis.

The Spatial Turn and Rhetoric

A word is needed on the conceptual framework used here because space is a complex concept that in the last decades has received an increased attention in social and literary studies. Rhetoric adds a further layer of complexity to the present analysis. To be sure, the Byzantines

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36   Isidore, *Encomium*, 194.7–197.17.

37   On the dynastic conflicts between Manuel II and his nephew John VII Palaiologos see D. Nicol, *The Last Centuries of Byzantium* (Cambridge, 1972), 290–315.

38   So far, the only comprehensive analyses of the imperial orations in their historical and political context is provided by Toth, "Imperial Orations" and D. Angelov, "Official Ideology" in *Imperial Ideology and Political Thought in Byzantium (1204–1330)*, ed. D. Angelov (Cambridge, 2006), 29–183.

39   N. Radošević, "Inoplemenici u *carskimgovorima* epohe Palaiologa," *ZRVI* 22 (1983): 147.

40   Several accounts of travels and descriptions of spaces appear in letters, e.g., Manuel's famous letter from the Ottoman camp in G. Dennis, *The Letters of Manuel II Palaeologus* (Washington, DC, 1977), 42–51.

41   Ed. Ferruccio Conti Bizzaro (Napoli, 1984), 68–84.

42   Metochites's *Encomium on Nicaea*, ed. E. Mineva (Athens, 1994), 314–25 and *Encomium of Constantinople*, ed. I. Pougounia (Oxford, D.Phil. thesis), 2003.

43   On Karbones, *Laudes Constantinopolitanae*, see E. Fenster (Munich, 1968), 122–29.

44   *Corinth* 47–48 and *Petrina* 49–55, ed. S. Lampros, *Παλαιολόγεια καὶ Πελοποννησιακά*, vol. 1.

45   Ed. O. Lampsides, *Ἀρχείον Πόντου* 39 (1984): 1–75.

46   Ed. F. Niutta, *Le due Rome confronto tra Roma e Constantinopoli* (Bologna, 2001), 3–24.

47   Ed. N. Tomadakes, "Joseph Bryennios," *Ἐπ.Ἑτ.Βυζ.Σπ.* 36 (1968): 1–16.

48   Ed. D. Balfour, *Politico-Historical Works of Symeon, Archbishop of Thessalonica (1416/17 to 1429)* (Vienna, 1979), 39–69.

49   Ed. G. Tsaras, *Ἰωάννου Ἀναγνώστου Διήγησις περὶ τῆς τελευταίας ἁλώσεως τῆς Θεσσαλονίκης: Μονῳδία ἐπὶ τῇ ἁλώσει τῆς Θεσσαλονίκης* (Thessalonike, 1958), 2–68.

50   Ed. E. Pinto, *Giovanni Cananos: L'assedio di Costantinopoli* (Messina, 1977), 53–75.

51   Ed. I. Polemis, "Two Praises of the Emperor Manuel II Palaiologos: Problems of Authorship," *BZ* 103 (2011): 690–720.

never developed a theory of representing space or nature. In Byzantine culture, spaces held an ambiguous position: on the one hand they were replete with symbolic meanings, but on the other hand they constituted an order of creation inferior to heavenly spaces.[52] Only in terms of rhetorical theory do descriptions of space receive attention, usually in discussions of *enargeia* (vividness).[53] I believe that one appropriate way to frame the issues of the typology and functionality of spatial representation in Byzantine texts in general and in Isidore's encomium in particular is to encompass both sides of space usage, symbolism, and rhetoric, in a unified approach that draws on concepts from recent theory of space.

There are several reasons for not limiting the investigation of Isidore's encomium to rhetorical analysis and for using a theoretical framework inspired by modern theories of space. First, spatial interpretation affords a more nuanced appreciation for a text that appears in a period characterized by previously unknown experiences such as long-term spatial discontinuity and population displacements. Second, due to the focus on rhetorical orations as long-lasting boilerplates of imperial ideology, much scholarship has concentrated on detailed characterizations of emperors, occasional critiques of court attitudes, or self-referential elements included by the authors themselves.[54] However, less attention has been paid to several of the most innovative elements of this rhetoric: veiled symbolism and underlying assumptions that shaped encomiastic representations. Since in the last decades of Byzantium symbols of power were used increasingly by rhetoricians and the space of Constantinople came to stand for Byzantium as a whole, it is worth investigating how such symbols were manipulated.[55] Third, a spatial reading of Isidore's panegyric brings into focus his own vision of imperial persona, which may be seen as a link between separate spheres of the Byzantine world

rather than as the supreme state authority. Finally, the representations of spaces influence the rhetorical texture, as they provide the background of the eulogy for Emperor John.

Approaches inspired by the spatial turn, a movement that calls for increased attention to place in the humanities and social sciences, have been applied to a plethora of texts both ancient and modern.[56] Many theoretical approaches developed in the past decades define space as a multidimensional construct. The concept cuts across a variety of disciplines: literature, religion, social studies, geography, and politics.[57] Since a thorough examination of spatial theory is beyond the scope of this study, I will limit myself to briefly addressing the main hypotheses and avenues of research that are relevant. I proceed from the assumptions of the pioneering work of Henri Lefebvre, who defined space as the "product of social, economic, and political powers."[58] This perspective involves a definition of spatial features in terms of mobility, time, borders, and territory.[59] Several further assumptions deriving from Lefebvre's approach are relevant for this study: space comes in different types and is parceled according to cultural or social affinities; spatial features often change and are constantly negotiated and reconstructed in the physical, cultural, and political map; there is no

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52   H. Maguire, *Nectar and Illusion: Nature in Byzantine Art and Literature* (Oxford, 2016), 75–77.

53   S. Papaioannou, "Byzantine Enargeia and Theories of Representation," in *Ekphrasis: La représentation des monuments dans les littératures byzantine et byzantino-slaves—Réalités et imaginaires = Byzantinoslavica* 69 (2011): 48–60.

54   E.g., Toth, "Imperial Orations."

55   In a recent volume C. J. Hilsdale argued that symbols like relics and icons were increasingly used for diplomacy and political means; *Byzantine Art and Diplomacy in an Age of Decline* (Cambridge, 2014), 234–35.

56   An illustration of the ways in which the notion of space can be applied to the analysis of various literary genres is de Jong, *Space* (n. 2 above).

57   Approaches like Foucault's notion of heterotopia, the phenomenology of space, geocriticism, or literary geography informed a variety of theories of space (M. Foucault, "Des espace autres," *Architecture mouvement continuité* 5 [1984]: 46–49). Attempts to explore the relationship between space, reality, and social representations emerged particularly in the aftermath of the postmodern emphasis on the spatial distribution of individuals and representations as opposed to previous chronological distributions. See M. Shymchyshyn, "Geocriticism at the Crossroads: An Overview," *Reconstruction* 4, no. 3 (2014), accessed 27 January 2017, http://reconstruction.eserver.org/Issues/143/Shymchyshyn.shtml. The creation and the morphology of sacred spaces have also been investigated in particular by A. Lidov, who developed the concept of hierotopy. See A. Lidov, "Hierotopy: The Creation of Sacred Spaces as a Form of Creativity and Subject of Cultural History," in *Hierotopy: Creation of Sacred Spaces in Byzantium and Medieval Russia* (Moscow, 2006), 32–58.

58   H. Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford, 1991), 14.

59   Their articulation can be found in G. Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space* (Boston, 1994); Lefebvre, *Production of Space*; E. Soja, *Journeys to Los Angeles* (Malden, MA, 1996); and R. Tally, *Spatiality* (New York, 2013).

absolute space, a situation which allows us to identify many contrasting pairs (*centrality* versus *provincialism*; *up* versus *down*; *inside* versus *outside*; *open* versus *closed*; etc.); spaces can be territorialized by excluding other groups or by confining only certain activities within their boundaries; they are flexible and have porous boundaries; they are generated by polysensory interactions with the environment involving both reasoning and vision.[60]

Certainly, these modern concepts are not always easily applicable to texts from the distant past, particularly in the medieval world, where, by and large, visible reality was regarded as a universe of appearances. Authenticity and reality were granted only to the divine, spiritual world, and for this reason outlining spaces was often deemed unimportant for conveying ideas or messages.[61] As a result, the spatial descriptions present in Byzantine texts can frequently appear conventional and stereotypical. Yet as recently suggested by the work of many Byzantinists, representations of spaces still allow us insight into political, religious, and literary practices or beliefs. Alice-Mary Talbot looked at how female monastic spaces were delimited but also transgressed despite strict civil and ecclesiastical regulations.[62] Vasileios Marinis studied the origins and the theological background of the Constantinopolitan Monastery of Lips as a space for burial.[63] Other scholars focused on the ceremonial, religious, and ideological aspects of Constantinople's major architectural complexes, especially those of Hagia Sophia and the Great Palace.[64] Research has also explored the role of geography in Byzantine historical texts. Paul Magdalino discussed the imperial geography and virtual horizon of Constantine VII reflected in his *De administrado imperio* and *De thematibus*,[65] while Anthony Kaldellis

looked at the geographical descriptions embedded in Laonikos Chalkokondyles's *Histories*.[66] Of more interest here are the studies that explored city encomia in Palaiologan Byzantium. In a recent paper, Aslıhan Akışık analyzed the fourteenth- and fifteenth-century encomia of Nicaea, Trebizond, and Thessalonike and argued that all these texts share similar motifs and symbols that helped in the construction of autonomous civic identities at a time when Constantinople was no longer the regional center of political power.[67] Andreas Rhoby and Frederick Lauritzen outlined the connections with the intellectual context in which city encomia were produced as responses within an ongoing dialogue between scholars.[68] More recently Dimiter Angelov identified three strands of late Byzantine geographical imagination (academic, political, and popular) and pointed out that for Byzantines the Constantinopolitan spatial perspective was particularly important as it signified the intersection between imagined geography and empire.[69]

This variety of approaches and focused insights indicates that an exclusively functionalist inquiry as to why descriptions of spaces were embedded in texts does not suffice to understand all the facets and implications of spatial representations. Given the panegyrical framing of the text, the construction of space in Isidore's oration cannot be divorced from the author's rhetorical strategy of extolling the ruler through both

60   For a more detailed discussion of the main tenets underlying the *spatial turn* see Tally, *Spatiality*.

61   A. Gurevich, "Ideas of Space and Time in the Middle Ages," in *Categories of Medieval Culture* (New York, 1985), 35–36.

62   A.-M. Talbot, "Women's Space in Byzantine Monasteries," *DOP* 52 (1998): 113–27.

63   V. Marinis, "Tombs and Burials in the Monastery *tou Libos* in Constantinople V," *DOP* 63 (2009): 147–66.

64   E.g., G. Dagron, *Emperor and Priest* (Cambridge, 2003), 84–127.

65   P. Magdalino, "Constantine VII and the Historical Geography of Empire," in Angelov and Bataki, *Imperial Geographies* (n. 1 above), 23–42.

66   A. Kaldellis, *A New Herodotos* (Washington, DC, 2014), 58–63.

67   A. Akışık, "Praising a City: Nicaea, Trebizond, and Thessalonike," *Journal of Turkish Studies* 36 (2011): 20–26. Discussions of the use of other diverse motifs and symbols in city encomia are also present in other studies, e.g., A. Voudouri, "Representations of Power in the Byzantios Logos of Theodore Metochites: Illusions and Realities," *Parekbolai* 3 (2013): 107–30 or H. Saradi, "The *Kallos* of the Byzantine City: The Development of a Rhetorical Topos and Historical Reality," *Gesta* 34 (1995): 37–56.

68   See A. Rhoby, "Theodore Metochites' Byzantios and Other City Encomia of the 13th and the 14th c.," in *Villes de toute beauté: L'Ekphrasis des cites dans les littératures byzantine et byzantino-slaves* (Paris, 2012), 82–99, and F. Lauritzen, "Bessarion's Political Thought: The Encomium to Trebizond," *Bulgaria Medievalis* 2 (2011): 153–59.

69   D. Angelov, "Asia and Europe Commonly Called East and West: Constantinople and Geographical Imagination in Byzantium," in Angelov and Batsaki, *Imperial Geographies*. More research on space and geographical imagination has been carried out concerning late antiquity. See S. F. Johnson, "Real and Imagined Geography" in *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Attila* (Cambridge, 2012), 394–413. He argues that in late antiquity, geographical imagination was embedded in the educational curriculum.

direct praise and narrative.[70] Therefore two further assumptions will also guide this study. First, speeches do not simply try to embellish reality, but also represent opportunities to suggest subtle changes of action or to redraw the contours of reality according to new perspectives.[71] Second, the late Byzantine rhetoricians' increased sensitivity to material spaces (siege accounts, city encomia, buildings) can help us better understand imperial rhetoric, all too often dismissed as stereotypical and conventional. Even if standard rhetorical elements and ideal views were ubiquitous, depictions of particular realistic situations were equally pervasive.

Experiencing Space: Visualization and Gaze

Isidore's representations of space become fully operational through the visualization that he conceives as an initial step in the process of conceptualizing and expressing praise. By and large, seeing places stands as a preliminary step in assigning particular hierarchical attributes and relationships to cities.[72] As sight can encompass both smaller and larger geographical areas, it prompts authors to get closer to the world they describe or, conversely, to stand a distance from a particular object of observation. This process of visualization allows them to reflect on the values and features embedded in each space.

No doubt, Byzantine authors developed according to particular contexts multiple ways of visually approaching objects or spaces.[73] For instance, it can be argued that many historians (including the late Byzantine ones)

zoomed out and favored a panoramic and mobile visual approach, to generate vivid accounts of actions that covered large spatial and chronological spans. On the contrary, authors of texts like the ekphraseis, which relied heavily on vivid visual cues, frequently zoomed in and concentrated on the finer details of objects.

In the case of panegyrics, despite the occasional presence of visual imagery or narrative,[74] an author's gaze is more difficult for us to capture since it frequently relied on tenets of imperial ideology or on particular performative circumstances. Furthermore, in this oration, as in many Byzantine rhetorical texts, sight is combined with other senses as well to produce an image aimed at recreating an object or an action in the reader's mind.[75] As Ruth Webb pointed out, appeals to senses were not uncommon in Byzantine encomiastic rhetoric since they were deemed to produce vividness (ἐνάργεια), evoke emotions, and inspire the audience's imagination.[76] These rhetorical expressions of sensorial perception were not only meant to strengthen the representation of reality, but also to faithfully reproduce the effects of real objects on viewers. Interestingly, such an approach resonated with the theological views of the world as divine creation. In a contemporary text on religious contemplation, Isidore Glabas (1341–1396) related reality to God, vision, and *logos* by comparing the created physical environment with a text. Accordingly, he conceived the world as a piece of writing in which objects and places were assimilated to syllables and

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70 On panegyrics and their mixture of praise and other topics or strategies in general see R. Rees, ed., *Latin Panegyric* (Oxford, 2012), 4–10.

71 See S.-M. Braund, "Praise and Protreptic in Early Imperial Panegyric: Cicero, Seneca, Pliny," in *Latin Panegyric*, ed. R. Rees (Oxford 2012), 85–109; D. Angelov, "Byzantine Imperial Panegyic as Advice Literature," in *Rhetoric in Byzantium*, ed. E. Jeffreys (Aldershot, 2003), 55–72; and M. Mullett "How to Criticize the Laudandus," in *Power and Subversion in Byzantium*, ed. D. Angelov (Farnham 2013), 247–62. Isidore's text also offers valuable insights, since much of it concerns issues that do not exclusively regard the emperor. See also Schmitt's argumentation about the speech's scope, "Kaiserrede," 240–41.

72 By and large, cities are invested with more value than less populated locales as they not only concentrate more resources but they also carry historical significance.

73 Despite its pervasiveness, the sensorial act of seeing and its pendant, gaze, reflected in Byzantine texts have received little attention;

see for instance R. Macrides, "Constantinople: The Crusaders' Gaze," in *Travel in the Byzantine World* (Aldershot, 2002), 193–212.

74 In addition to moral virtues, panegyrics made extensive use of comparisons with past historical characters and used vivid language. More generally, on the poetics of praise in panegyrics see L. Pernot, *La rhétorique de l'éloge dans le monde gréco-romain*, vol. 1 (Paris, 1993), and R. Rees, ed., *Oxford Readings in Latin Panegyrics* (Oxford, 2012).

75 An instance of such an approach that considers all senses is provided by John Eugenikos, in his *ekphrasis* of Corinth: Τὸ δὲ χαριέστατον, ὡς τῇ ὄψει καὶ ἀκοῇ καὶ γεῦσις συνήδεται, ἡ μὲν τοῖς τε ἄλλοις τῶν μουσικῶν καὶ μὴν καὶ Πανδιονίδικόρῃ, Πρόκνῃ ἡδείᾳ τὸν υἱὸν Ἴτυν ἀνακαλουμένῃ, μυθικὸς ἄν τις εἴπεν, ἢ δὴ θαμὰ τρωπῶσα χέει μελίγηρυν ἀοιδὴν, ἡ δ' ὅτι τοῖς ὀρείοις καὶ ἀκάρποις φυτοῖς καὶ συχνὰτῶν ἡμέρων παραμέμικται (1:51.22–24, ed. Lampros, *Παλαιολόγεια καὶ Πελοποννησιακά*).

76 R. Webb, *Ekphrasis, Imagination and Persuasion in Ancient Rhetorical Theory and Practice* (Farnham, 2009), 22.

sentences which one had to decipher through vision in order to understand the divine creation.[77]

Isidore of Kiev seems to attach himself to this aesthetic tradition and thereby departs from the models privileged by other panegyrists. He highlights his awareness of the power of sight when he differentiates between the ways in which panegyrists, philosophers, or poets see.[78] He also insists that although it is the words which produce enargeia, one cannot express urban beauty in its entirety but needs to directly experience a setting like the city of Constantinople.[79] As he indicates, seeing, as opposed to the conceptualization of virtues, constitutes the main mode of engaging with the spatial milieu and ultimately, with the emperor and his audience.[80] Thus, at the outset, after laying out the difficulty of his rhetorical task and the speech divisions, the encomiast encourages his audience to turn their attention and gaze at the city and its hinterland.[81] It is the moment when Isidore points out the importance of vision, for he describes the senses of sight and hearing as preliminary stages of reasoning, and as the only senses mediating between the reality of things and *logos*:

> It is not the words which generate the deeds but the deeds yield words; . . . for none of the other senses offers the same force and truthfulness of reality as clearly as the act of seeing [ὅρασις]; for by perceiving the visible things clearly and

unambiguously and as if the products of perception are sent to the soul through the doors of the eyes, the soul receives the clear and unadulterated marks of reality.[82]

These initial statements that underline the power of visualization are reinforced by Isidore's remarks that eulogy produces effects only when based on accurate observations. He suggests that rhetorical visualization involves more than a localized description of imperial spaces. If visualization is the main mediating channel between audience and reality, then one needs to be present instead of simply assimilating a secondary description in order to understand the magnitude of imperial virtues or spaces.[83] An approach that highlights the connection between vision and the physical environment allows Isidore to constantly zoom in and out, thereby uncovering features of multiple spatial units: Constantinople, its surroundings, Thessaly, Morea, and even more distant locations. Tellingly, the programmatic value injected into the act of visual observation becomes more apparent in his observations about the composition of the oration. Initial statements about the type of oration that can be found in other panegyrics correspond here to the remarks about the mechanisms of visualization.[84]

A look at Isidore's use of terms designating the act of seeing can also help us understand how his vantage points served his compositional strategy. By and large, he systematically refers to how objects and places

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77   Isidore Glabas, Ἰσιδώρου Γλαβᾶ περιστασιακὲς ὁμιλίες (Thessalonike, 1981), 3.3.16–21: Καὶ ἁπλῶς οὐδὲν ἐστὶ τῶν ὁρωμένων, ὃ μὴ Θεοῦ λόγους ἐγγεγραμμένους ἑαυτῷ φέρει, καθάπερ τὰ ἐν ταῖς στήλαις ἐγχαραττόμενα γράμματα, οἶ σαφεῖς μὲν οὕτω πρόκεινται παντί, ὡς μηδένα παιδευτοῦ πρὸς ἀνάγνωσιν δεῖσθαι, ἀλλ' ἐξεῖναι καὶ τοῖς πάντηγραμμάτων ἀμυήτοις, εἴγε βούλοιντομόνον, καὶ ἁπλᾶ μόνα τὰ στοιχεῖα τούτων ἀναγνωρίζειν καὶ συλλαβὰς ἐντεῦθεν πλέκειν, εἶτα καὶ λόγον ὅλον ὑφαίνειν (my emphasis).

78   Καί τις ἰδὼν φιλόσοφος ἀνὴρ τὰ θεῖα, εἶπεν ἂν τῆς τοῦ θεοῦ μητρός, ἥσπερ καὶ ἡ πόλις, ἢ τῆς φύσεως εἶναι δῶρον· καὶ εἴ τις λέγεται ἢ μυθεύεται μακάρων τόπος καὶ Ἠλύσιον πεδίον ἀθανασίαν τοῖς ἐκεῖσε χαριζόμενον ἀφικνουμένοις οἱ τοῦτον ἑωρακότες ἐκεῖνον ἐλογοποίησαν, παρὰ τοῦ ἀληθοῦς, τούτου τὸν μυθευόμενον ἐκεῖνον ἀναπλάσαντες (141.20–142.5). A similar change of perspective appears in John Eugenikos's *Ekphrasis of Corinth*: Κατιόντι δὲ ἤδη τοῦ λόφουτὰ χαριέστατα πάντα πανταχόθεν ἀπαντᾷ (54.11).

79   133.17 and 191.26. On *enargeia* as a technique rather than as a genre see R. Webb, *Ekphrasis* (Aldershot, 2003), 87–107.

80   The vocabulary relative to seeing is also pervasive. Terms from the semantic area of *seeing* (ὄμμα, ὀφθαλμός, ὁράω) are used extensively.

81   133–35.

82   133.4–18: οὐ γὰρ οἱ λόγοι τὰς πράξεις, ἀλλ' αἱ πράξεις ποιοῦσι τοὺς λόγους· . . . τῶν γάρ τοι γιγνομένων τὴν δύναμιν καὶ τὴν ἀλήθειαν οὐδεμία τις τῶν ἑτέρων αἰσθήσεων οὕτω σαφῶς ὡς ἔχει παρίστησιν ἐκεῖνα ὥσπερ ὅρασις· ἀντιλαμβανόμενος γὰρ τῶν ὁρατῶν καθαρὰ καὶ ἀναμφίλεκτα καὶ ὥσπερ διὰ θυρίων τινῶν τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν παραπέμπει τῇ ψυχῇ, τοὺς τύπους ἐκείνων σαφεῖς ἀναματτομένη καὶ ἀκιβδήλους.

83   For the notion that sight (ὅρασις) is better and more accurate than other senses see 133.9–11 and 191.25–27: Τὸ μὲν οὖν ξύμπαν ἀκριβῶς παραπέμψαι ὡς ἔχει τῇ ψυχῇ ὁράσεως ἔργον ἢ λόγου μᾶλλον. Τὰς γὰρ εἰκόνας τῶν ὁρωμένων πραγμάτων σαφεῖς ἡ ὄψις ἐγγράφει τῷ φρονήματι καθαρῶς·

84   Many Palaiologan rhetoricians discuss the form of their speech as well as the succession of different rubrics. For example, John Chortasmenos in his *epibaterios* to the emperor states in the *protheoria* of the speech the genre, the form, and the type of his composition: *Johannes Chortasmenos: Briefe, Gedichte und kleine Schriften*, ed. Hunger, vol. 2 (Vienna, 1969), 2–14. Most extensive observations on the mechanisms of visualization are confined to the preface of the oration (133.8–14).

should appear to the beholder. The frequency of the terms for visualization (ὁρᾶν, ὅρασις, ὄψις, θέα, θέαμα, βλέπειν, or other words for eyes[85]) is striking. His use of such terms contrasts with the scarcity or the lack thereof in contemporary panegyrics and urban ekphraseis like those of John Eugenikos and Bessarion, or the siege accounts of Anagnostes and Kananos.

The role of visualization can be further traced by examining the author's gaze, a connected aspect pertaining to the scope and nature of the visual field.[86] Recent scholars of ancient works have included this concept in their narratological analyses, thereby allowing us a greater understanding of the purpose of shifting standpoints in a single text.[87] It has also been noticed that the rhetorically constructed gaze reveals not only strictly subjective but also political and social views. Gaze thus becomes both a way of "taking into possession" and of organizing a reality with multiple spaces.[88] Isidore's gaze not only effectively orients the audience's attention toward the spatial elements that the author perceives as important (the city and other territories of conflict);[89] it also situates the emperor in the world. If in the first half of the text, the author's gaze follows a guided trajectory that unveils elements like the city's air, water, land, and inhabitants as well as his father's deeds, it is only after this long excursus[90] that Isidore focuses on Emperor John, the core topic of his praise. Such mechanics of gaze suggest that the ruler-*laudandus* loses some of his centrality and

exceptionality, while the surrounding physical realities receive more attention.

Isidore does not employ a single type of gaze but rather a combination of different gazes, which create a compositional variety that eventually reverberates in the use of multiple spaces. The changes of perspective appear especially at the junctures of the rhetorical rubrics of the speech.[91] One major change of viewpoints occurs at the beginning of the section immediately following the ekphrasis of Constantinople, where Isidore displays his concerns about the progress of the encomium. After hinting at the anxiety of having engaged in a too lengthy encomium of the capital,[92] he continues with a series of rhetorical questions meant to provide guidance about the ensuing topics of the oration[93] and to indicate the relation of his text to historical writings.[94]

These differences in the nature of gaze are highlighted in other ways as well. In the debut of the panegyric, gaze rests upon Constantinople's geographical features, such as its position and favorable weather throughout the year.[95] Then, the author's vantage point moves outside the city; the focus broadens to encompass all the extensive territory that Constantinople bridges: Asia and Europe,[96] as well as the remaining territories of the empire. Such changes of perspectives allow us to distinguish two major kinds of gaze that reflect the author's interplay between city encomium and narrative of imperial military achievements: one contemplative top-down gaze similar to a bird's-eye view[97] and another that remains at the ground level

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85   For ὁρᾶν, ὅρασις, ὄψις, θέα, θέαμα, βλέπειν see 147.30, 148.30, 161.1, 173.13, 191.26, 145.16, 133.11, 163.15, 176.10, 190.8, 147.4, 145.33, 191.6, etc.; ὄμμα 165.12 and 191.6; ὀφθαλμός 163.7, 191.3, 133.13, 148.24, 191.31.

86   A notion that further qualifies the process of seeing, gaze has allowed scholars to incorporate several additional perspectives: cinematic (L. Mulvey), psychological (J. Lacan), gender, or ideological-postcolonial. Here I will use the concept of gaze in a narrower sense to describe the arrangement of the various spatial elements in the oration.

87   For the role of gaze in the construction of narrative, see H. Lovatt, *The Epic Gaze: Vision, Gender and Narrative in Ancient Epic* (Cambridge, 2013).

88   See "The Prophetic Gaze" in ibid., 122–61.

89   191.27: Τὰς γὰρ εἰκόνας τῶν ὁρωμένων πραγμάτων σαφεῖς ἡ ὄψις ἐγγράφει τῷ φρονήματι καθαρῶς· ὅθεν καὶ πάντες ὁρῶσι καὶ θαυμάζουσι τοσόν ("Let the act of seeing inscribe into the mind the clear images of the things which are seen; thus, everyone will see and marvel such a great vision.").

90   For the excursus see 136.13–157.22.

91   136.13, 154.32, 157.23, 166.18.

92   154.32: Ἀλλὰ τίς ἂν ἤδη γένωμαι τοῦ βασιλείου τῶν ἐγκωμίων τοῦδε γένους ἁψάμενος;

93   154.33–155.4: ποῖ καὶ τραπόμενος ἄρξωμαι· τῆς ἀρχῆς; ἀλλὰ πλέον ἀνήκειτοῦ φανεροῦ καὶ προχείρου· ἀλλὰ τοῦ τέλους; καὶ ποῦ τοῦτό γε καταλεῖπόν ἐστι λόγον; τί δαί, παρεὶς ἐκεῖνα, τὸ μέσον ἀρχὴν θήσομαι καὶ κρηπῖδα; καὶ πῶς ὁ λόγος τὸ ἴσον καὶ συμφωνοῦν ἂν ἑαυτῷ φυλάξῃ διατέλους καὶ ἐναρμόνιον;

94   155.13: ἱστορίας λόγοι καὶ συγγραφαὶ.

95   See below.

96   137.21–23: Ἀσία δὲ καὶ Εὐρώπη τὰ μεγάλα τῆς οἰκουμένης ἐπί τε ἀνδρίᾳ ἐπί τε σοφίᾳ ἐπί τε ταῖς ἄλλαις ἀρεταῖς ὀνόματα.

97   Other contemporary texts like John Eugenikos's *Ekphrasis of Petrina* use the same kind of panegyrical gaze which produces further representations and intense impressions in the beholder. Λεληθότως γεμὴν τὸν ἑκατέρωθεν ἀπεργάζεται σύνδεσμον, καὶ τῇ ἱλαρᾷ ὑπαλλαγῇ τὴν ὄψιν ἡμῖν λαμπρῶς ἑστιᾷ. Εἶπες ἂν ἰδὼν ἑσπέρας

and is delineated in the second half of the panegyric. This latter gaze resembles the hodological perspective of an individual making a journey and accompanying the emperor on campaign. Essentially, this perspective depends on the paths followed by the emperor and denotes movement, action, and transgression of the borders between territories. Both gazes underline the functions of space in this Basilikos Logos.[98] The contemplative stance adopted in the description of Constantinople institutes a certain distance between the viewer and the city and offers the author a position of authority which he eventually uses to issue judgment on the situation in the empire.[99] Conversely, an active hodological perspective is located within the space of imperial action and is largely guided by external factors: agency, intrepid mobility, and duress of confrontation.

Isidore's panegyric thus produces a shift in the use of visualization in late Byzantine encomiastic contexts. Within this new perspective that shapes the Basilikos Logos, perception and image-making acquire enhanced roles. As powerful vehicles for ideas, images both replace straightforward (but abstract) praise of virtues and introduce ambiguous and even subversive meanings: if what is immediately perceived through one's sight has true value, then the space that is immediately perceived can have a value at least comparable to the virtues of the *laudandus*. As his contemplative gaze delays the direct praise of the *laudandus*, Isidore thus suggests that the visible world acquires autonomy from the emperor. In the following, I will look into the kinds of spaces unveiled by these different types of viewing.

Dividing the Byzantine Realm: Types of Space

The above observations attest that visualization was a process integral to the construction of Isidore's encomium. It also suggests that the author's gaze was directed not only to the emperors, Manuel II and John VIII, who often appear to recede in the background, but also to spaces: urban, provincial, local, universal, inside, outside, far, or near. In this section, I will explore the anatomy of these spatial dimensions and how they

allow Isidore to achieve the aims of persuasive imperial praise and to reshape the public understanding of the Byzantine community in the later empire.[100] The contrast between order and disorder that cuts through the panegyric is translated in spatial terms and is predicated upon the opposition between an *inside* space, i.e., the protective space of Byzantine rule, albeit reduced to the city of Constantinople, and an *outside* space of the more distant Byzantine provinces of Morea and Thessaly.

Isidore's approach to imperial authority has certain peculiarities, as the Byzantine tradition of panegyrics rather precluded the extensive use of concrete information and often tended to distort reality in favor of the *laudandus*. Although rhetorical handbooks recommended that encomia include details about individuals or actions because this information was deemed to increase the credibility of a eulogy, the rhetoricians' omission of explicit evidence (especially geographical) is pervasive. This is also the case in late imperial orations, which often relied on lists and extended treatments of individual virtues.[101] On the contrary, Isidore's encomium blends in the imperial image many references to his actions. Thus, Isidore's approach makes the representation of the *laudandus* more sensitive to the outside world in general and to spaces, in particular, than to John's innate virtues.

The features and functions of the spatial representations in Isidore's panegyric can be defined both on their own terms and by analogy with other spaces developed in late Byzantine texts. The author employs a rhetorical template that furnishes the scaffolding for praise but also evokes the interlocking circuits of an empire whose geography remains fundamental to its resilience and reproduction. This underlying meaning of the text is reflected by the multiple spatial representations that surface in connection with aspects like borders, communication, individual mobility, and agency. The terms designating various types of spaces are pervasive:

τὸν χῶρον ἀπομιμεῖσθαι καὶ ἠοῦς κρᾶσιν ἐν ἡμέραις καὶ νυξὶν ἢ χάριν ἦρος ἐν ὥραις (*Ekphrasis of Petrina* 50.16).

98   141.14.

99   See especially the comparison of the physical location of Constantinople with the physical locations of other cities: 139–40.

100   On the use of space as persuasive tool in oratory see M. P. de Bakker, "Oratory: Lysias and Demosthenes," in de Jong, *Space* (n. 2 above), 377–412.

101   In late Byzantine rhetoric, many texts follow a schematic approach to the deployment of imperial virtues as in Mark Eugenikos's brief encomium to John VIII, in which he compares the four cardinal virtues to flowers (Lampros, *Παλαιολόγεια καὶ Πελοποννησιακά*, 1:33–34). A similar scheme of the division between sections corresponding to each of the four versions is applied by John Dokeianos in his encomium for Emperor Constantine (ibid., 1:221–31).

γῆ (earth), πόλις (city), and χῶρος (land) have a high frequency, along with vocabulary referring to houses, palaces, harbors, and defense walls.[102] Spatial divisions like those between Asia and Europe or between regions inhabited by Greeks and Latins, dimensions,[103] place names, concrete geographical details, and inventories of cities or places are also present.[104]

Isidore's imagery is partly borrowed from historical narratives or panegyrics. On the one hand, Isidore follows historical accounts where space emphasized complexity of action across large territories, or efforts to achieve military results and to establish connections between communities.[105] On the other hand, he also follows the models provided by encomiastic prose where space holds several distinct characteristics: amplitude (physical and chronological extent), immutability, perfect order and unity, divinely inspired harmony maintained through imperial authority, or, on the contrary, chaos that needs restoration to a previous condition.

Given this rhetorical framework, when approaching Isidore's spatial representations we should keep in mind that many other late Byzantine rhetorical compositions confronted and tried to explain the empire's territorial losses.[106] Territories like the Morea or major urban centers like Thessalonike or Trebizond drew the attention of Byzantine writers who regarded them as prime locations for a revival of Byzantine identity. The high number of city encomia and other urban-centered texts suggests a desire for urban stability and protection in opposition to the instability created by the conflicts among local groups.[107] Unlike other spaces, the urban ones possessed preestablished long-standing structures and elements that provided social stability, like the road system and many ancient monuments. From this perspective, to a certain extent Isidore's text brings together the thematic foci of a wide range of late Byzantine writers.

Inside *and* Outside:
The Space of Contemplation and the Space of Action

As suggested above, two main spatial layers coexist in this oration and constitute the background of imperial actions: the space of the enclosed, unified territory of the city and another space of the Byzantine province beyond immediate reach that appears distant, open, and multiplex. These two layers either include or are connected to other spatial levels. On the one hand, we encounter microspaces like churches, local monuments, and the borderlands connecting the provinces;[108] on the other hand, they are subordinated to a much larger space of cosmic dimensions that engulfs all the individual territorial units. This all-encompassing space corresponds to ideas of nature and inhabited land, φύσις and οἰκουμένη.[109] Thus, the two main spatial layers are horizontally distinguished, but also vertically and hierarchically integrated in an overarching framework.

As will be shown in the following section, the author develops deep contrasts between the two layers by presenting a primary opposition between capital and province. The former is a space of affectivity pointing to the emperor's biography (his birth and family), the latter a space lost to the imperial authority (at least temporarily), where an ongoing military resistance takes place. One is a space of contemplation and security for the community, the other a space of action, mobility, risk-taking, and danger. One is the monolithic space of an urban community rooted in a long history; the other is the fragmentary space of dispersion and dissipation of forces. Several other contrasting features stand out: the first space is intimately lived whereas the other is distant and comes to the attention of the audience only through the author's mediation. Access from the outside to one space is restricted whereas for the other

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102   E.g. γῆ appears more than forty times in geographical contexts: 138.18, 139.23, 145.16, 148.17, 137.5; likewise πόλις.

103   E.g., μέτρον in 137.13

104   E.g., Corinth 165.32 and *passim*, Thessaly 164.4 and 165.30, the Peloponnese 174.15 and *passim*, Messenia 174.22, Kenchrea 176.17, Western (ἕσπερος) Europe 178.22, Alpheios and Achelous Rivers 195.13, Elis 195.14, Epiros, Ithaca, Leukas, Zakynthos, and Kephalonia 194.10–15. Often names of places are replaced by ethnonyms.

105   Such characteristics have been explored in ancient Greek historiography: T. Rood, "Herodotus" and "Thucydides," in de Jong, *Space*, 121–59.

106   On the attitudes towards territorial losses in late Byzantium see I. Ševčenko, "The Decline of Byzantium Seen through the Eyes of Its Intellectuals," *DOP* 15 (1986): 167–86.

107   One result of this propensity is that authors of urban encomia frequently describe the city walls. See Akışık, "Praising a City" (n. 67 above), 2 and 11.

108   E.g., 148.8 and 154.16.

109   E.g., 167.11 (τῇ φύσει χρέος ἦν τὸ θειότερον καὶ καθαρώτερον ἑαυτῆς ἐξενεγκεῖν), 169.14 (καὶ τὴν φύσει βασιλικὴν πάντη καλλύνει, πάντη κατακοσμεῖ), 141.22 (ἡ πόλις τῆς φύσεως εἶναι δῶρον), 188.17 (καὶ νόμος καὶ φύσις καὶ τάξις ἀπείργει βασιλέα), 137.21 (Ἀσία δὲ καὶ Εὐρώπη, τὰ μεγάλα τῆς οἰκουμένης), 145.28 (ἡ βασιλὶς τῶν ἁπασῶν, ἡ τῆς οἰκουμένης μητρόπολις).

access is open, a situation which ultimately leads to its recapturing by the Byzantines. The degree of mobility also differentiates the two spaces: in the city, movement is limited and internal whereas in the provinces, the mobility of the emperor and his army across external boundaries is essential.

INSIDE: THE ENCLOSED SPACE OF CONTEMPLATION

As Lampros noted in his introduction to the edition of the *Encomium*, about a third of this lengthy oration is a eulogizing description of Constantinople.[110] This embedded description stands as a singular case in late Byzantine rhetoric, for short city encomia disguised as praises for one's fatherland were often eschewed as superfluous.[111] More often than not, rhetoricians treated the biography of the *laudandus* in a few sentences before honing in on an account of deeds and character. Yet Isidore not only states Constantinople's supremacy; he also details an urban space arranged in symmetric concentric circles and breaks down the urban features that confer the city transcendence over all other places of the ecumene. As a matter of fact, Isidore treats at length features that are only fragmentarily present in other contemporary city encomia: geographical location, architecture, foundation, history, and citizens. Although it may seem counterintuitive at first, no contemporary city encomium had a complete set of features, a situation which was also noticed with regard to late antique city praises.[112] All these details might have played a central role in Isidore's strategy of addressing the emperor. The idea of Constantinople's magnificence certainly had a long tradition and became especially popular in

the aftermath of Michael VIII's return from Nicaea,[113] but Isidore's exhaustive treatment seems to have more far-reaching implications.

The author's elaborate description of the Constantinopolitan realm serves as a central element in the dynamic of "inside" and "outside" spaces: the city represents an island of eternal bliss for its inhabitants within the violent and rapidly changing world of the late medieval eastern Mediterranean. Constantinople's manifold features can be spelled out not only in relation to the conventions of praise compositions but also in conjunction with factors like time, mobility, or the physical arrangement of various built structures. Several aspects stand out in the literary representation of this kind of space: the city's rich historical past, its paradisiacal physical features, the civic body of its free citizens, and the concentric order of its subunits.[114]

The author's contemplative gaze, operational in the first section of the panegyric, generates many of these features. As a reflective individual act, the contemplation of the city involves working through various appearances and experiences that increase the realism of the account. It is this contemplative gaze that guides the reader from the urban hinterland toward the "inside" before the author turns his attention to the events in continental Greece.[115] Gaze also allows Isidore to pinpoint processes like the majestic movement of light, which progressively unveils the attributes of the city.[116] As his contemplative gaze moves in slow motion from one architectural object to another, it reveals Constantinople's unity and stability within a larger universal order delimited by the four cardinal

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110   136.13–154.31.

111   The presentation of Constantinople takes little room in another encomium addressed to John VIII that nevertheless repeats some of the ideas of Isidore's *Panegyric*, especially the connection between Asia and Europe: *Encomium*, 202.6–203.27. Other contemporary encomiastic texts (and not always imperial) make explicit that references to one's place of birth are superfluous: e.g., Makarios Makres, *Encomium for Metropolitan Gabriel*, 102.50 and *Encomium for the Seven Fathers of the Church*, 66.59. Likewise John Dokeianos in his Basilikos Logos for emperor Constantine XI collapses the sections of *patris* (Constantinople and γένος) in a single paragraph (*Παλαιολόγεια καὶ Πελοποννησιακά*, 3:224.29–225.11).

112   L. Pernot indicates that there are no such city encomia with details about all the features; "L'éloge de cités," in *La rhétorique de l'éloge dans le monde gréco-romain* (Paris, 1993), 179.

113   Fenster, *Laudes Constantinopolitanae* (n. 3 above) and Angelov, "Official Ideology" (n. 38 above), 114. More generally on the revival of city encomia in the Palaiologan period see H. Saradi, "Η *Ἔκφρασις τῆς Τραπεζούντας ἀπό τον Βησσαρίωνα Η ἀρχαιότης καὶ το ιστορικό μήνυμα*," *Βυζαντινός Δόμος* 17–18 (2009–10): 33–34.

114   These issues stand in stark contrast with those found in other encomia of Constantinople, e.g., Theodore Metochites, in his *Byzantios*, looked at the protection of the Theotokos and the economic importance of trade in Constantinople. Voudouri, "Representations" (n. 67 above) and A. Rhoby, "Theodore Metochites' *Byzantios* and Other City Encomia of the 13th and 14th Centuries," in *Villes de toute beauté* (n. 68 above), 81–99.

115   144.30–31: Ἀλλὰ τὰ μὲν παρὰ τῆς θαλάττης τῇ πόλει τοσαῦτα καὶ πλείω καὶ καλλίω μᾶλλον ἢ πλείω.

116   139.30–32.

points, an image which hints at the city's central place in the inhabited world.[117]

As a monolithic unit without spatial gaps or thresholds, Constantinople holds clear, uncontested boundaries within which its urban space is rigorously organized.[118] Isidore uses several terms that denote a strict demarcation between the "inside" and the "outside," for instance, περίβολος (enclosure),[119] and τείχη καὶ πύργοι (the walls with the towers).[120] The heavy use of these terms also introduces a certain ambiguity, for the walls and ditches that surround Constantinople not only make it invincible but also point to the limits of imperial authority as confined to the precincts of the city.

In his construction of the Constantinopolitan space, Isidore adopts several key themes of medieval city praises which transmitted the image of cities as consolidated places of authority and dwelling: preservation and continuous reenactment of traditions (especially imperial ceremonies), cohesiveness and defense of communities, provision of freedom and a social framework for individual aspirations, and promotion of religious and ideological programs through public displays.[121] As with other city encomia, the author insists on Constantinople's resemblance to paradise. Still, there is an important addition to this topos of *locus amoenus*, namely an insistence on the need to directly experience the urban setting.[122] The city enchants the senses; the air itself is fresh and delightful and generates relief for its inhabitants.[123]

Its rivers and surrounding seas also contribute to the well-being of inhabitants,[124] while the order of the landmarks of the city (the Golden Horn, Bosporos, and Galata) enforces there presentation of a protected paradise. Even Galata, despite its autonomy under Genoese rule, is meant to defend Constantinople.[125] Water surrounds the city and makes Constantinople appear as a center where everything converges.[126]

Not unlike other encomiasts of Constantinople, Isidore constantly connects these physical features to symbolic notions of the city's centrality.[127] For instance, when detailing the city's climate, air, and atmosphere he compares these features to the clarity of reason that also guides the community's life. As noted by Angelov, the geographical location turns Constantinople into a universal axis, both a center of the world and a bridging space between Asia and Europe, whose antagonizing forces balance on either side in perfect harmony.[128] Following past views of Mediterranean geography and presenting Constantinople as a center point, Isidore displays a standard tripartite division of the world into Libya (Africa), Asia, and Europe.[129] The first one was often perceived to have a dry climate and lack proper conditions for human life, while Asia and Europe were envisioned as ideal moral and physical spaces.[130] According to Isidore, Asia and Europe vie for supremacy in a constant conflict, and only the city can bring concord (ὁμόνοια) and peace (οὐκ ἐῶσα ταύτας ἀφίστασθαι) to the two continents.[131] Constantinople

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117   139.34–140.14: Αἱ μὲν γὰρ πρὸς ἔω μάλιστα θερμότεραι τοῦ δέοντος τυγχάνουσαι λυποῦσι τῇ ξηρότητί τε καὶ θερμότητι τοὺς οἰκοῦντας ἐν αὐταῖς· (continues with west, north, south).

118   148.1.

119   147.16.

120   147.25.

121   152.28–153.30.

122   141.14: Ἀλλὰ τίς ἂν λόγος παραστήσῃ τοῖς οὐκ εἰδόσιν ἐκεῖνα καλῶς: "But what would this discourse provide to those who do not know well those <features>?"

123   140.4–8: Τοιαύτην εἴληφεν εὐαρμοστίαν καὶ εὐαερίαν ὁ ὑπερκείμενος ἐκείνης ἀήρ, μέτριος ὅλος, φαιδρός, κύκλῳ περιρρέων πᾶσαν τὴν πόλιν, διαφεύγων τὸ λυποῦν καὶ ὑπερβάλλον ἅπαν, καὶ ὑπερεκκέχυται τῆς πόλεως.

124   143.14–21: Αὐτίκα τοίνυν ναμάτων πλήθη καὶ πηγῶν ἀφθονίαν καὶ ποταμῶν ἀενάων ῥεῖθρα, τῶν μὲν παραρρεόντων, τῶν δὲ πορρώτερον καὶ κατὰ λόγον ὥσπερ τινὰ καὶ τάξιν, ἔστι δ' οἷς καὶ διὰ μέσης αὐτῆς ῥεόντων, τῶν δ' ὑπορρεόντων, καὶ τὸ δὴ καινότερον καὶ ὃ θαῦμα καὶ ἀκοῦσαι, ἐρισάσης ὥσπερ καὶ τὴν φύσιν ὑπερβαλέσθαι καὶ τὰ καινότατα ἐκεῖνα καὶ ἐξάκουστα, ποταμοὺς ἐναερίους ἁμιλλωμένης ἀποφῆναι, πότιμα πάντα διειδῆ καὶ καλὸν νάοντα.

125   146.21–22: Γαλατᾶς ὄνομα τῇ πόλει· καὶ πρὸς μὲν τὰς ἄλλας πόλεις ἱκανὴ καὶ αὐτάρκης, πρὸς δὲ τὴν βασιλίδα προάστειον καὶ ὂν αὐτῆς καὶ φαινόμενον.

126   143.6–14: Καὶ εἶπες ἂν ἰδὼν αὐτῆς εἶναι τὰ πελάγη, τῶν κόλπων αὐτῆς ὡς ἀπὸ ταμιείου τινὸς προχέουσα, δεξιᾷ μὲν ὡς πρὸς ἔω τετραμμένην Προποντίδα, καὶ δι' Ἑλλησπόντου τὸν Αἰγαῖον καὶ τὰ λοιπὰ τῶν πελαγῶν ἀπερευγομένη, τελοῦσα καὶ συγκλείουσα κόλπους ὅλους καὶ λιμένας τοὺς ἐντὸς Ἡρακλείων στηλῶν, τὰ δὲ πρὸς ἄρκτον Πόντον Εὔξεινον καὶ τὴν Μαιῶτιν, καὶ δι' ἐκείνων πάντα ἐπισπωμένη καὶ συνάγουσα παρ' ἑαυτῇ ποταμῶν μεγίστων καὶ καλλίστων ἀέναα ῥεύματα, ὧν οὐδὲν ἄπεστιν αὐτῆς.

127   On the general features and preeminence of Constantinople in Byzantine rhetoric see Angelov, "Asia and Europe," in *Imperial Geographies* (n. 71 above).

128   Ibid.

129   137.3–28.

130   137.21–23.

131   138.3.

balances (ἀντεξισάζουσα) the main parts of the world (τὰ μεγάλα καὶ λαμπρὰ καὶ διαρκῆ τοῖς ἀνθρώποις καὶ πᾶσι τμήματα) which it joins and brings together through itself (συνάπτει καὶ συνάγει δι᾽ ἑαυτῆς).[132] This harmonization is not only geographical but also social, for the city unites the two continents as if in a single community (ὥσπερ εἴς τινα κοινωνίαν καὶ ἐπιμιξίαν ἀλλήλων).[133]

To this image of the capital as a city mediating between two worlds Isidore attaches the notion of Constantinople as a collective unit of free and autonomous citizens sharing similar virtues and acting together. It is possible that Isidore's emphasis on the independence and freedom of the citizens not only echoed the aspirations of the Constantinopolitan elites but was also intended to parallel similar ideas in spatial representations of contemporaries like Plethon, John Eugenikos, and Bessarion.[134] Isidore also avoids references to the dire situation of the city[135] and largely overlooks the representation of sacred spaces and objects (churches, monasteries, relics), otherwise common topics in similar contemporary texts.[136] The author departs from the image of a religious capital and instead frames the city as an urban node of communication between East and West.

The correlation between space and time reveals other distinct features and functions of the Constantinopolitan realm. By and large, the author's perspective remains anchored in a pervasive present, as Isidore, like most authors of ekphraseis, constantly strives for vividness and actuality.[137] However, the relation between this kind of space and time is more complex, for the embedded city encomium suspends the fast-paced flow of time unfolding in the second part of the panegyric. On the one hand, through this suspension or rather dilation of time, the author takes the opportunity to describe at large the architectural elements populating the city. On the other hand, Constantinople with all its features and buildings becomes a space where memories of a past era constantly surface. Isidore makes an excursus into the history of the city[138] in which he refers to the early heroes and the Dorian settlers,[139] thereby signaling an intention to represent the urban colony as Byzantium's cradle and protective space.[140] The city stands as a place that protects and enforces the idea of community, its memory, and ultimately its identity. Such a representation configures Constantinople as a space shaped by time, where the memory of past events and ancient monuments is mixed with present realities. The description provides an ongoing experience and not just a nostalgic remembrance.[141] Constantinople thus surfaces as larger than just the emperor's and his family's residence. It includes a repository of objects, buildings, and urban landmarks indicative of a past glory that can be reenacted in the present time.

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132   137.32–33.

133   138.2.

134   E.g., John Eugenikos, *Corinth*, 47.20, Bessarion, *Trebizond*, 43, Theodore Laskaris, *Nicaea*, 358. On freedom in late Byzantine city praises, see Akışık, "Praising a City" (n. 67 above), who argues that although freedom came in different molds, it was a major motif in the construction of these texts. On the late Byzantine concept of freedom more generally, see D. Angelov, "Three Kinds of Liberty as Political Ideals in Byzantium, Twelfth to Fifteenth Century," *Proceedings of the 22nd International Congress of Byzantine Studies*, vol. 1 (Sofia, 2011), 311–31.

135   Negative remarks on early fifteenth-century conditions of life are pervasive in the rhetoric of the time, e.g., Joseph Bryennios (*Advisory Oration on the Reconstruction of the Walls*), Demetrios Chrysoloras (*Oration on the Theotokos*), and Ruy G. Clavijo (*Embassy to Tamerlane*).

136   Manuel Chrysoloras's *Comparison of the Old and the New Rome* provides ample space for the description of the numerous churches and relics which suggest the importance of them to both cities, Manuel Chrysoloras, "Comparison," in *Medioevo Greco* (2000): 10.15 or 13.23 (ed. M. Bilo). On Theodore Metochites's praise of Constantinople in his *Byzantios* and emphasis on spiritual protection see Voudouri, "Representation," 123–24.

137   R. Webb argued that ἐνάργεια and not the topic of a text constituted the main aspect that distinguished *ekphraseis* from other compositions like narratives; *Ekphrasis, Imagination and Persuasion in Ancient Rhetorical Theory and Practice* (Aldershot, 2013), 71–74.

138   Isidore's account encompasses the entire history of the city. He begins with Byzas (149.24) and proceeds through the history of Byzantion (150), pointing to architectural features like the walls and the towers (150.11–19).

139   142.1.

140   The city of Byzantion provided refuge on many occasions: Καὶ σημεῖον ἀκριβὲς τῶν εἰρημένων· Ἀθηναῖοί ποτε δείσαντες περίτε αὑτῶν περί τε τῆς πόλεως περί τε σφῶν τῶν χρημάτων, Βυζάντιον μόνον ἔγνωσαν ἐχυρὰν καταφυγὴν καὶ ἀσφάλειαν καὶ μόνην τῶν πόλεων ἀνάλωτον πασῶν, καί, τὰ κάλλιστα καὶ τιμιώτατα ταύτῃ τῶν χρημάτων παραθέντες, ἔγνωσαν ὀρθῶς βουλευσάμενοι (151.30).

141   Τὰ μὲν οὖν παλαιὰ καὶ πάνυ παλαιὰ καὶ ὁ χρόνος πλεῖστος ὅ τι μάλιστα καὶ τῆς μνήμης ἐγγὺς ὑπερεκπίπτων τυγχάνει, τὴν ἀκρίβειαν καὶ καθαρότητα τῶν παλαιῶν αὐτῆς τροπαίων καὶ ἀγώνων καὶ κατορθωμάτων ἐξίτηλον καὶ ἀμαυρὰν ἡμῖν παραπέμπων, εἰ μήπου τοῦ κατάρξαντος ἐκείνης οἰκιστοῦ τοὔνομα τὸ πρῶτον μετά τινων ἐπεξηγήσεων ὀλίγου νοῦ πάνυτοι καθαρῶς ἐπεξειργασμένων περισώζων (149.17–21).

Another example of distinct spatial features can be found in the double rhetorical framing—ekphrastic and panegyrical—of Isidore's representation of space. The author's ekphrastic predilection regarding the effects that the city and its physical milieu produce on inhabitants and visitors can be seen in his statement that upon entering Constantinople one is flooded with experiences combining present and past memories.[142] Given the text's overarching aim of praising the emperor, the urban space is also meant to stand as a configurative aspect of the imperial persona, for the city is presented not only as a place of community protection and development but also as the emperor's dynastic fatherland and consequently a manifestation of Byzantine authority. However, because the emperor is absent from the city description and the city remains the only space that the emperor fully controls, the rhetorical strategy of expanding the urban encomium poses some problems. It is only the ordered "inside" of the city, albeit repurposed mainly for community protection, that situates the emperor as a symbol with political authority, for "outside," his authority is challenged in the military conflicts.

Though many of these features can be identified in other contemporary texts (especially urban encomia), Isidore forges a completely different profile for his praise. All the elements of Isidore's description are not presented in isolation. Rather, the city is portrayed as a micro-universe with its own chronology, rules, and order. Thus, the urban space appears to be geometrically organized in concentric circles progressing from the outside toward the inside: initially, the text deals with the benefits of the clear air and the surrounding atmosphere; it proceeds to the rewards of being surrounded by water, harbors, and walls; finally, it describes the beauty of the land (green pastures, meadows, landscape, fertile soil).[143] Eventually, the focus shifts *intra muros* to the buildings and the community inhabiting the city: the group of free and autonomous citizens,[144] another aspect that underscores the inside–outside dichotomy by pointing to the civil liberties which the city provides.[145] Such a detailed look at the Constantinopolitan citizens is unique in late Byzantine

urban encomia[146] as well as within the panegyric tradition, where individual spatial elements and the inhabitants of non-palatial spaces receive little attention and only in the context of imperial actions of liberation.

Although certainly hyperbolic, all these features of the Constantinopolitan urban space reflect more than a submissive attitude to the emperor's *patris* or mere nostalgia for a past glorious era. Even if, by and large, the encomiasts' task was to create urban spaces of bliss to contrast with the spaces of conflict that needed pacification, Isidore's detailed description of Constantinople plays a uniquely central role that accentuates the city's singularity, protective functions, and ability to foster communication both physically (between continents) and temporally (between past, present, and future). The city does not just generate a sense of stability; its geographical centrality and insularity turn it into a nucleus of human life that holds a privileged position in the ecumene. Nevertheless, the emperor's relation with this space remains ambiguous. The value of a dynastic *patris*, which Constantinople upholds, does not deter Isidore from evacuating the imperial figure from the description. Thereby, the encomiast shapes a "weak" relation between the emperor and the capital to leave the former more room for development in the ensuing sections of the text.

THE *OUTSIDE*: THE OPEN SPACE OF ACTION

In addition to the Constantinopolitan realm, the panegyric develops another category of space, far larger than that of the "queen of cities" and covering an area encompassing continental Greece and the eastern Mediterranean. The frequency of toponyms and concrete historical information enhances the impression that the author tried to deploy a realistic effect whereby he associated the virtuous *laudandus* with a space of action. In order to create a vivid account based on the intrepid action of exceptional individuals, Isidore exhibits pieces of evidence of territorial organization (e.g., roads, borders, walls), or depicts actions involving territorial extension (expeditions, military campaigns,

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142   149.15–17.

143   144.30–150.19.

144   150.20.

145   152.28.

146   Other contemporary encomia, while presenting similar aspects (walls, hinterland, monuments, citizens) do not focus particularly on the order. For instance, Manuel Chrysoloras in his *Comparison of Old and New Rome* begins with a look at the Constantinopolitan walls (10.13), but then he proceeds to citizens (10.14) and other monuments.

conflicts).[147] This space is configured in the second half of the panegyric and characterized by a focalization technique that swings from close-ups to panoramic vantage points. Specifically, Isidore documents the recovery of former Byzantine territories and the journeys of Manuel II in Western Europe, the Peloponnese, and Thessaly. The timeframe spans over several decades, from Manuel II's accession to throne in 1391 to the Battle of the Gulf of Patras and the victory of John VIII over Carlo Tocco in 1427.[148] The description of the emperor's military achievements is not unexpected in the text's structure, as most panegyrics included sections on military qualities that involved accounts of conflicts. Yet here Isidore changes this approach to provide not only isolated episodes, but also a historicizing treatment.

This outside space is completely different from the orderly layered space of Constantinople with its balanced proportions of outstanding physical and man-made structures. It does not serve as a space where the past is still a tangible presence, nor is it meant as a determining factor of collective identity; instead, it is a vector of imperial mobility and of military campaigns carried out by the victorious emperor. Its representation falls into two rhetorical sections: the description of John VIII's family (γένος) with particular attention to his father, and the account of his achievements (πράξεις/ἐπιτηδεύματα) divided according to the four cardinal virtues (courage, wisdom, prudence, and justice). The construction of space across these two separate rhetorical sections indicates not only textual coherence, but also continuity of planned action between the reigns of Manuel and John as a result of their shared motivations, attitudes, and ideals.

A prominent aspect of this borderless space is its considerable physical extent. The author casts a broad look over the European territories that encompasses actions occurring on land and sea, east and west, on islands and continental territories or cities, from the Aegean to Gibraltar.[149] He reiterates the empire's phys-

ical expanse several times and especially when narrating the tribulations of the Byzantine populations that fell under foreign occupation and were reconquered afterward.[150]

Another feature of this space of action is its direct association not with a stable community and perfectly ordered architecture but with the action of two individuals: John VIII, the *laudandus*, and his father, Manuel II. The section dedicated to the ruling family begins with a eulogy of imperial predecessors and continues with extended praise of John's father and predecessor, a praise which certainly echoed Manuel's reputation among late Byzantine scholars.[151] However, unlike other panegyrics, it is not the emperor's moral and intellectual virtues that draw the majority of the author's attention, but rather Manuel's extensive travels as a result of a περιπέτεια that took him to visit many peoples both Roman and Italic[152] and forced him to leave Constantinople for military purposes.[153]

John VIII's eulogy, although beginning and ending with sizable lists of moral virtues,[154] also includes an account of his military expeditions more substantial than the description of other virtues. Here, Isidore

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147 E.g., 160.4 (Battle of Nicopolis) or 195.22 (Battle of the Gulf of Patras).

148 195.20–197.18.

149 161.6–15: Συνεπισκεψάμενος τοίνυν καὶ συνεωρακὼς τὰ μὲν κατ᾽ ἤπειρον πάντ᾽ ἀπερρυηκότα καὶ πεφθαρμένα, ἔχει δ᾽ ἔτι ἀκμὴν ἡ θάλαττα καὶ δύναμίν τινα, καί, ταύτης εἰ κρατεῖν ξυμβαίη, ξυμβαίη ἂν καὶ τὴν ἀπὸ τῶν βαρβάρων ἐκφυγεῖν πανωλεθρίαν, συμμάχους ὑποποιησάμενος πάντας ὅσοι θαλάττης σχεδὸν ἥπτοντο, πάντες δ᾽ ἦσαν οὗτοι οἱ πρὸς ἑσπέραν ἀπὸ τοῦ Αἰγαίου μέχρι τῶν Ἡρακλείων στηλῶν

καθήκοντες, νησιώτιδες καὶ πάραλοι πόλεις θαλασσοκρατοῦσαι τηνικαῦτα, καὶ τούτους μᾶλλον ἢ τοὺς ἀρχομένους ἑτέροις πείσας, εἶχε παρὰ τῇ πόλει συνεχεῖς τοὺς ἀποστόλους πέμποντας, τοῦτο μὲν εἰς φυλακήν, τοῦτο δ᾽ εἰς τὴν τῶν ἐπιτηδείων κατακομιδήν, τοῦτο δ᾽ εἰς ἄμυναν τῶν πολεμίων.

150 163.14–25: Αὐθωρὸν γὰρ ἥλωμὲν αὐτός, ἥλω δὲ φιλτάτων τινά, ἥλωσαν αἱ τούτου σύζυγοι· εἶδεν αὐτὰς δουλικὸν ἠμφιεσμένας καὶ οἰνοχοούσας δαιτυμόσι παρ᾽ ἄλλοις· ἥλω καὶ κατατέθραυσται καὶ προσούδισται πᾶν αὐτῷ τὸ στράτευμα πληροῦν εἰς μυριάδας ὅ τι πλείστας, χρημάτων ἀμυθήτων καὶ παντοδαπῶν θημωνίαι, πόλεις ἀριθμῷ τάχα δὴμηδ᾽ ὑποπίπτουσαι, ἐπαρχίαι πᾶσαι· αὗται δ᾽ εἰσὶν ἀπὸ τῆς Σινωπέων μέχρι Κιλίκων· καὶ πᾶσα ἡ ἐντὸς ταυρικῶν ὀρέων μέχρι θαλάττης καθήκουσα καὶ περιγραφομένη γῆ ἐξ ἐφόδου μιᾶς τεμιρικῆς, ὥσπερ ἀπό τινος φορᾶς ὑδάτων κατακλυσμοῦ, κατεκλύσθη, καὶ ὑπέσυρε πᾶσαν αὐτὴν καὶ κατηνδραποδίσατο μηδὲ τῶν ἀλόγων ἐκεῖνος φεισάμενος.

151 E.g. Makarios Makres's *Funeral Oration* or Demetrios Chrysoloras's *Comparison between the Ancient and the New Ruler*.

152 Explicit praise for rather conventional intellectual and physical virtues (e.g., prudence, justice, military skills) surfaces only in some sections of the panegyric: 169.1–172, 181.32–193.6, and 197.16–199.30. On references to his visits to Italy see 156.10–17.

153 Noticeably, Isidore's panegyric is the only contemporary rhetorical text that emphasizes Manuel's campaigns and not his intellectual legacy.

154 In particular, the ending of the panegyric displays a complete list of virtues 198.28–199.30.

relies on numerous spatial anchor-points that were familiar to his audience. For instance, the state of affairs in the Peloponnese receives a detailed report, which points to the emperors' use of many resources to regain control.[155] Likewise, when dealing with the reconquest of certain places in Thessaly, Isidore closely follows the campaigns conducted by the emperor.[156]

The emperor's mobility across various territories and seas further defines this type of space. Mobility not only provides coherence to an extensive section of the text, thereby allowing the author to cover more than one topic; it also points to the dynamism in the Byzantine space outside Constantinople. By introducing the idea of instability generated by regional political changes in the Peloponnese as well as that of constant crossings of territorial boundaries, mobility delineates additional facets of the emperor's identity. We thus perceive an active ruler involved in numerous campaigns for liberating Byzantine territories. Concomitantly, mobility creates a combination of events and individual actions that echoes a historical narrative. Isidore's account includes an unusual series of returns from other distant territories to Constantinople as well as recoveries of lost territories. Manuel thus first arrives in the Peloponnese: "And setting out with a great army, which Maneskalos, a noble Genoese gave to him, he arrived in the Peloponnese in the well-defended city of Monemvasia."[157]

Then he leaves for the West: "And the emperor was regarded as a miracle, and rulers and noblemen and Western states received him as their emperor, and honored and venerated him like someone sent from the heavens. Then he crossed the sea into England."[158]

Then again the emperor returns gloriously from the West and is celebrated both in the Peloponnese and on the Hellespont: "Afterward, the emperor gloriously returns from the West and the happy people, the senators, and the emperor himself meet in a splendid ceremony of reception."[159]

Mobility also appears in an ensuing section where Isidore reports on Manuel II's gradual recovery of territories and cities in continental Greece after the emperor's return from the West.[160] He notes Manuel's intention to arrange the provincial affairs,[161] shows how he sets off for Thessalonike,[162] restores imperial authority on the island of Thasos,[163] then returns to Corinth, rebuilds the Hexamilion wall,[164] and pacifies the Peloponnese.[165] This series of actions culminates in the ruler's eventual return to Constantinople, where he anoints (χρίει) John VIII as co-emperor.[166]

The picture of intense movement across distant spaces appears in other instances as well: when Bayezid attacked Europe,[167] when the Western rulers set out against the Ottomans,[168] and when the crusaders crossed the Danube to confront the Ottomans and join the emperor:

> But those confident because of their manliness and multitude of people, arms, resources, and protected horses crossed the Danube and near the city of Nicopolis are crushed by the barbarians, and causing a lot of destruction, they ran out of the place in a disordered manner, and they turned away without any trace of tactics in a despicable move that showed lack of experience. . . . Many noble Genoese who were the first to come across the barbarians were captured, and shortly afterward many others and the entire battlefield fell to the Ottomans' hands. Their ruler, having survived yet shaking

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155   On the affairs in the Peloponnese, see 162–65 and 195.

156   164–65 and 174.14–175.6.

157   162.1–4: Καὶ τοίνυν ἄρας ἐκεῖθεν στόλῳ παμπληθεῖ, ὃν ἐκόμισεν αὐτῷ Γαλάτης ἀνὴρ τῶν εὐγεγονότων, Μανεσκάλος ἐκεῖνος, καὶ τὰ μέγιστα δυνάμενος παρὰ βασιλεῖ τῷ Γαλατῶν, ἧκεν εἰς Πελοπόννησον, ἧκεν εἰς Μονεμβασίαν, πόλιν τῆς Πελοποννήσου τὴν ἐρυμνοτάτην. This particular episode relates his departure for western Europe in 1399.

158   162.10–16: Καὶ γίγνεται τοῖς ἰδοῦσιν ὁ βασιλεὺς θαῦμα, καὶ δέχονται τοῦτον οἱ ἐκεῖσε βασιλεῖς καὶ ἄρχοντες καὶ πᾶσα ἡ ἑσπέρα ὥσπερ βασιλέα σφῶν, καὶ τιμῶσι καὶ δοξάζουσιν ὡσπερεί τιν᾽ ἀπ᾽ οὐρανοῦ φανέντα. Καὶ διαβάλλει μέχρις Ἀλουίωνος.

159   163.26–30: Κἀντεῦθεν ὁ βασιλεὺς ἐκεῖνος λαμπρῶς ἀνάγεται τῆς ἑσπέρας, καὶ τῶν οἰκητόρων ἐξιόντες οἱ εὐδαίμονες καὶ ὅσοι τῆς συγκλήτου καὶ βασιλεὺς αὐτὸς μετὰ λαμπρᾶς τινος ἀπαντῶσι τῆς ὑποδοχῆς.

160   163.26–166.17.

161   164.23.

162   165.1.

163   165.29.

164   165.32.

165   166.2.

166   166.7.

167   κεκίνητο Παγιαζίτης ἐκεῖνος (158.23).

168   κινεῖ τὰς ἑσπερίας . . . κινεῖ Κέλτων, κινεῖ Γαλατῶν (159.18–23).

of fear, arrived at the boats: for there lay moored several Roman and imperial galleys.[169]

The same kind of intense mobility characterizes John VIII as well. Isidore emphasizes action in the account of his imperial virtues and describes John as δραστήριον καὶ ποιητικόν ("active and productive") above everything else.[170] We thus find the emperor on campaign in Thessaly (ἐκστρατεύει),[171] involved in conflicts with barbarians,[172] or traveling to the Peloponnese and restoring Byzantine authority there.[173] Furthermore, his actions seem to echo other eventful changes like the Ottoman conquests in Asia Minor.[174]

The space of the second part of the panegyric is also characterized by limited temporal extension: the campaigns (military and diplomatic) take place during a specific period of time, and there are few references to objects inherited from the past. Here it is the space that defines the passage of time, unlike in the ekphrasis of Constantinople, where the time of a legendary history shaped the urban space. While Constantinople seems to remain unchanged through centuries of glorious history, the space of action changes constantly as it repeatedly falls under different authorities.[175] Thus, the space of action is inextricably linked to the temporal development of the narrative plot of the emperors' *reconquista* that sees them acting for the empire's salvation. If generally in encomia temporality is not as acute as in historical writing, nevertheless, here it gains more significance as it reinforces the emperor's fast-paced mobility and the changes he operates. Actions develop

not in an indeterminate time covering both present and legendary beginnings, but over precise periods that span only a few years, as for instance when the emperor leaves Constantinople for the diplomatic journey in the West and then returns after several years.[176]

Such features as extension, fragmentation, mobility, and military action allow us to understand the entirely different nature of the space of action. This is certainly not a space concentrically arranged in successive rings from the outside to the inside, but rather a linear and circular one in which emperors move from one point to another or, when needed, return to the capital. This space thus opposes the idea of static order developed in the previous section. As for the emperors' representation within the boundaries of this space, it is certainly more substantial, for they remain constant despite the frequent shifts in their surroundings. Still, especially in late Byzantium, their relation with the space of action remains fragile due to the implied constant losses of territories and the constant attempts to restore peace.

Functions of Spatial Representations: Rhetoric and Symbols

All these distinctive features indicate the pervasiveness and diversity of spatial representations in Isidore's panegyric. In order to arrive at a deeper understanding of their scope and functions, we need not only to look at individual sections and particular spatial traits but also to consider the global picture of the Byzantine world that the text provides. According to ancient rhetorical approaches, descriptions of spaces constituted no more than ornamental digressions classified as *descriptio* and *evidentia* (or *enargeia*) within the *ornatus* of a speech.[177] The ornamental purpose of spatial descriptions in Byzantine panegyrics is evident when we consider the enduring penchant of rhetoricians for abstract virtues. However, the pervading representations of various and contrasting spaces often acquire more than an ornamental role: they symbolize virtues and moral attributes, characterize and psychologize individuals,

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169 Ἀλλ’ ἐκεῖνοι, θαρρήσαντες σφῶν τῇ εὐανδρίᾳ, τῇ πολυανδρίᾳ, τοῖς ὅπλοις, τοῖς χρήμασι, τοῖς τῶν ἵππων καταφράκτοις, διαβαλόντες τὸν Ἴστρον, περὶ τὴν ἐκεῖσε πόλιν τὴν Νικόπολιν, τοῖς βαρβάροις συρρήγνυνται, καί, φθόρον δράσαντες πολύν, ἀτακτότερον ἐπεξιόντες καὶ προεκδραμόντες, μᾶλλον δὲ οὐδὲ τακτικῶς συστάντες τρέπονταί τινα τροπὴν νεανικὴν καὶ κατάπτυστον. [Καὶ τί μὲν ἔπαθον, τί δὲ ἐγένοντο Ἴστρου προχοαὶ καὶ τὰ παρίστρια τοῦτ’ ἴσασι πεδία.] Ἑάλωσαν δὲ καὶ πολλοὶ Γαλατῶν τῶν εὐγενῶν, οἳ καὶ πρῶτοι τοῖς βαρβάροις συνέπεσον, καὶ μετὰ μικρὸν οὐκ ὀλίγοι τῶν ἄλλων καὶ τὸ στρατόπεδον ἅπαν. Ὁ δ’ ἐκείνων βασιλεύς, ὥσπερ ὑπότρομος ὑπεκφυγών, ἐνέβη ταῖς ναυσίν· ἐφώρμων γὰρ ἐκεῖσε τριήρεις ῥωμαϊκαί τε καὶ βασιλικαί (160.1–12).

170 175.8.

171 173.17.

172 174.3.

173 174.10–175.6 and 176.10–18.

174 176.30.

175 195.20–197.17.

176 163.26.

177 H. Lausberg, *Handbook of Literary Rhetoric: A Foundation for Literary Study* (Leiden, 1998), 360.

or reflect changes and attempts thereof in the tenor of various communities.[178]

The spatial representations embedded in Isidore's panegyric can be seen to operate at two main levels, rhetorical and symbolic. In terms of rhetorical functionality, Isidore's use of space creates a thematic contrast whereby the peaceful, limited space of the city is opposed to the borderless provinces of continental Greece. This deep contrast adds a sense of tension within the panegyric's vivid panoramic picture, taking the reader from tranquil, familiar cityscapes to the far corners of the empire embroiled in military conflicts. Space thus allows the author to bring additional elements into his praise, to zoom in and out, and to move more easily between the topics of his oration: imperial fatherland, the actions of John's predecessors, and the virtues of the *laudandus* himself.

Similarly, space holds a characterizing function, for it stands as a backdrop against which the two emperors' images are outlined. As it speaks about persons and their milieus, space signals the vigor of two emperors involved in conflicts and peace negotiations.[179] This characterizing function introduces a certain ambiguity, for the mythical grandeur of the *laudandus* wanes once juxtaposed with the organized spatial horizon of a Constantinople populated by "free and autonomous citizens." This idea finds further support in the author's construction of praise. Isidore certainly lavishes praise on the emperor as he portrays him as noble, highly educated, wise, and valiant.[180] Despite the presence of such notions, several tropes of imperial rhetoric common in those days are missing: the emperor is compared neither with the sun, nor with a shepherd of people, nor with a divinely inspired person.[181] In addition, Isidore highlights that John was crowned by his father, a possible nod to the contemporary debates over the emperor's anointment and divine origins of authority.[182] Thus, by overlooking several core encomiastic elements and combining the account of the emperor's actions with one of Constantinople in which he is conspicuously absent, Isidore shifts the thematic focus from the image of the omnipotent ruler to the general realities of the state.

Despite all the unique and innovative features of this encomium, the roots of spatiality in Isidore's text may be traced back to selected works of contemporary Byzantine writers. As already mentioned, the encomium reflects the Palaiologan revival of the rhetorical genre of urban ekphrasis, a trend visible in the substantial number of orations dedicated to cities other than Constantinople. Isidore's spatial functionality reflects other changes in Palaiologan rhetoric. One such trend was an increase in the number of advisory orations that propose actions to be undertaken for safeguarding the state.[183] Late Palaiologan rhetoric already cultivated a tendency to heighten the dramatic effects of eulogy by invoking individual agency in critical moments which, given the dire circumstances of the empire, were not few. Several Palaiologan authors deal less with explicit direct praise of virtues and elaborate more on the political-historical contexts so that they subsequently formulate hortatory statements.[184] Many early fifteenth-century panegyrics, although much shorter, feature vivid description of a single military achievement. Such panegyrics include the already mentioned *logos* of John Chortasmenos and the anonymous imperial oration, both dedicated to Manuel II. More similarities with Isidore's encomium can be identified

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178 For the various genres of ancient literature see the multiple functions discussed by de Jong in *Space* (n. 2 above), 13–17.

179 Reflections of political skills are combined with intellectual and moral virtues, a common *topos* of encomia: e.g., 191.17–19 or 172.7–8: . . . καὶ ὅσα τῆς Ἀριστοτέλους τυγχάνει λογικῆς πραγματείας σχεδὸν οὐδ' ἐν τοῖς ἀγῶσιν ἀφίσταται τοῦ πολέμου. . . . On peace negotiations see ὅρκοις καὶ ταῖς συνθήκαις (164.18) and σπονδαί (174.4 and 178.8).

180 The emperor-knight and horseman, 188.28; his generosity, 182.12; prudence, 182.16; knowledge, 182.27; piety, 178.11; justice, 184.5; courage, 193.9.

181 E.g., the praise of Kydones for the emperors, see C. Zgoll, *Heiligkeit—Ehre—Macht: Ein Modell für den Wandel der*

Herrschaftskonzeption im Spätmittelalter am Beispiel der byzantinischen Kydonesbriefe (Cologne, 2007), 34–101.

182 The unusual presence of the father of the *laudandus* in this panegyric may also indicate the author's intention to represent the emperor as not necessarily unique but as a part of a longer chain of virtuous rulers.

183 E.g., Joseph Bryennios, *On the Reconstruction of the City* or Demetrios Chrysoloras, *Oration to the Theotokos*. In other cases another tendency seems to be present, as authors experiment with forms and rhetorical genres by creating generic mixtures or hybrids. Such cases include the *Hundred Letters* of Demetrios Chrysoloras, an epistolary collection written in the manner of a set of religious injunctions, and John Chortasmenos's *Funeral Oration for Asan*, which combines verse, prose, and ekphrasis.

184 E.g., Manuel II Palaiologos, *Funeral Oration for His Brother Theodore, Despot of Morea.*

in Manuel II Palaiologos's *Funeral Oration for His Brother Theodore, Despot of Morea*, a text which gives an extended account of Theodore II Palaiologos's deeds. In this composition, Manuel offered a chronological narrative that included a detailed description of the spatial background of the despot's *epitedeumata* (accomplishments). As recently argued, this short history of the Morea, embedded in a funeral encomium, served to legitimize Manuel's authority in his dynastic conflict.[185] Furthermore, given that Isidore himself copied and performed the oration in Mystras in the year 1415[186] and that the text produced numerous echoes in its time,[187] it is plausible that Isidore could have attempted to emulate his imperial patron.

All these examples reflect the efforts of late Byzantine authors to engage in a process of rhetorical innovation (καινοτομία, νεωτερισμός) that occasionally involved the use of space as a key ingredient in an oration. The changes Isidore introduced and the unique features of his oration did not regard only the unusual extension of the speech but also the rhetorical effects he expected to achieve.[188] While most contemporary imperial orations were shorter and allegorized imperial virtues, this one expanded the text and increased its

realism. Furthermore, while many contemporary Byzantine authors experimented with rhetorical *disposition* (organization) and created hybrid texts, thereby departing from formal rules encapsulated in prescriptive texts of rhetorical theory, Isidore turned to rhetorical *inventio* and introduced new elements of content.[189] Thus, he dealt less directly with virtue, the common ingredient of imperial praise, and showed more interest in spatial representations as reflections of virtue. In this way, space became the active force organizing the textual evidence of praise. By physically contextualizing the central categories of imperial realities (ceremonial splendor of the imperial city, glorious dynastic lineage, but also armed conflicts), Isidore offered a fresh perspective on the practice of imperial eulogy and challenged the expectations of the late Byzantine rhetorical community.

Yet Isidore's use of spatial representations goes far beyond the immediate purposes of rhetorical thematic composition, as it configures salient symbolic undertones as well. The attention to spaces suggests that Isidore intended for his audience to envision themselves in specific locations. With the losses of territory during the last centuries of Byzantium, encomiastic descriptions seem to function as reenactments of lost spaces and bring to mind their past extent. Since comprehensive Byzantine historical narratives, common in the previous centuries, were missing, the orator's role increased accordingly.

The underlying oppositions developed in the text, outside versus inside or center versus periphery, also underpin the political concerns intensely voiced during that period. The text appeared at a time when several Palaiologan scholars attempted to posit reforms to the Byzantine state that would ensure its endurance. Many compositions mirroring these concerns shifted the public attention from the capital city to other places of the empire that claimed a certain degree of regional autonomy.[190] One instance was Bessarion's *Encomium of Trebizond*, a text centered on the glorious military history of the city of Trebizond and the resemblance

185   F. Leonte, "A Brief *History of the Morea* as Seen through the Eyes of an Emperor-Rhetorician: Manuel II Palaiologos's Funeral Oration for Theodore, Despot of the Morea," in *Viewing the Morea*, ed. S. Gerstel (Washington, DC, 2013), 397–417.

186   Isidore, Letter 5, *Analecta Byzantino-Russica*, ed. W. Regel (Petrograd, 1891), 65–69.

187   Manuel Chrysoloras dedicated a lengthy commentary to the text: C. G. Patrineles and D. Sophianos, *Manuel Chrysoloras and His Discourse Addressed to the Emperor Manuel II Palaeologus* (Athens, 2001), 61–131.

188   Particularly remarkable is his reliance on narratives of military campaigns, a strategy that in public rhetoric was deemed to produce more clarity of praise. Thus, in the chapter on clarity (σαφήνεια) and purity (καθαρότης) Hermogenes argued that one common way to attain clarity is narration: "It is characteristic of the approach that is most typical of Purity to use narration and not to introduce the facts of the case in any other way. For narration is an approach not a figure as some think. You could use many figures in your narration, nominative cases and oblique cases, subdivisions and divisions. Generally, in fact, a narration is created out of many figures, and things that are figures themselves are not created out of other figures. Whether it is an approach or a figure, one must realize that narration is useful in creating Purity. . . . The diction that is appropriate to Purity is everyday language that everyone uses, not that which is abstruse or harsh-sounding" (Hermogenes, *On Style* [Chapel Hill, 1987], 229, trans. W. Wooten).

189   In rhetorical terms this aspect corresponds to the *invention* of a speech. See M. Heath, "Invention," in *Handbook of Classical Rhetoric*, ed. S. Porter (Leiden, 1997), 89–120.

190   For discussion of different levels of autonomy enjoyed by Byzantine provincial urban centers see also J. Shea, "The Late Byzantine City: Social, Economic and Institutional Profile" (PhD diss., University of Birmingham, 2010).

to Athens, its ancient metropolis.[191] In a similar vein, John Eugenikos praised Corinth and Petrina as major nodes on the map of the Morea. Another notable case of centrifugal writing comes from the philosopher and scholar George Gemistos Plethon. In a memorandum addressed to the emperor in the early fifteenth century,[192] he proposed a thorough reform based on the idea of a Helleno-centric state that was to be founded in the Peloponnese, a province which he regarded as the cradle of Hellenism.[193] On this occasion, Plethon, while drawing on Platonic ideas of state reformation, detailed his description of the ideal state and provided a social and political program that involved a clear-cut distinction between social groups. At the same time, he dismissed the role of Constantinople as center of the Greek world and described it as a mere reflection of the Peloponnese.[194]

Isidore's encomium, written several years after this memorandum, stands in stark contrast with Plethon's radical ideas. The opposition becomes even more striking if we take into account the asymmetric teacher–disciple relation between the two writers.[195] Contrary to Plethon's ideas of reform and centrifugal tendencies, Isidore continued to emphasize the magnificence of Constantinople and its centrality in the Mediterranean world, despite the fact that it had entered a steep decline in size and population at the turn of the fourteenth century.[196] Moreover, the detailed account of military conflicts in Morea, the description of the dominant disorder there, and the territorial limitation of the Byzantine possessions in that province rather suggest that he regarded this space as secondary to the imperial power and accessory to the survival of Byzantium. Though the Morea features largely in his encomium and Isidore, a native of Monemvasia, creates the image of a province in the course of pacification, ultimately the dominant image is that of a province distant, turbulent, and separated from the empire's capital.

It appears therefore that in the political context and intellectual milieu of the early fifteenth century, the representation of space was instrumental in articulating a response to the changes occurring in the empire.[197] Isidore's reaction to the political developments within the Byzantine state drew on several major issues. On the one hand, the encomiast utilized space to project a particular representation of late Byzantine imperial rule. In a changing state with numerous territorial and authority gaps and divided between its oversized isolated capital and several small provincial areas, the ruler became the only person capable of alleviating the tensions arising between order and chaos and between the two kinds of imperial territories: capital and periphery. Within this space-dominated framework, the emperor ceased to act as the supreme and absolute ruler, the idealized image cultivated in panegyrics.[198] Instead, he assumed the role of a cementing force that held together the capital and the scattered imperial territories, thereby guaranteeing the preservation of Byzantine identity. He mediated between the different meanings which each of the two spaces represents: he enshrined the brilliance and self-sufficiency of Constantinople while also recalling the empire's fragility and limits.

Furthermore, the different sets of features Isidore assigns to the city and to the provincial areas reconfigure the territorial symbolism and scale of the empire. Modern space theory commonly understands the construction of territory or territoriality as "a behavioral phenomenon associated with the organization of space into demarcated units which are made distinctive and considered at least partially exclusive by their definers."[199] One manifestation of territoriality is the creation of spatial relationships that induce the restriction of a particular set of activities to a defined space and the prohibition of groups from the space owned by another

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191 Saradi, "Ἔκφρασις" (n. 113 above).

192 George Gemistos Plethon, *Memorandum for Emperor Manuel Palaiologos*, ed. Lampros, *Παλαιολόγεια καὶ Πελοποννησιακά*, 3:246–65.

193 Ibid., 247.

194 Ibid., 247–48. Plethon mentions that the founders of Constantinople were Dorians who originated from the Peloponnese.

195 C. M. Woodhouse, *George Gemistos Plethon: The Last of the Hellenes* (Oxford, 1986), 37.

196 A. Laiou and C. Morisson, *The Byzantine Economy* (Cambridge, 2007), 196.

197 Ševčenko, "Decline" (n. 106 above).

198 One instance of this idealized image in Palaiologan literature is Mark Eugenikos's encomium addressed to Emperor John VIII, which is in fact a comparison of virtues with flowers; ed. Lampros, *Παλαιολόγεια καὶ Πελοποννησιακά*, 3:259–64.

199 E. Soja, *The Political Organization of Space* (Washington, DC, 1971), 17.

group.[200] From this perspective, by insisting on the demarcation lines between the outside and the inside, Isidore emphasized Constantinople's territoriality, a key element that continued to shape the identity of the Byzantine community.[201] Concomitantly, the space of action coinciding with the rest of the empire was de-territorialized and de-structured through atomization.

Another consequence of territoriality is the creation of hierarchical orders, an idea which Isidore deployed when ranking spaces according to their value. He replaces the previous representations of an almost endless imperial space developed horizontally across large areas with the notion of a territorialized space defined in vertical-hierarchical terms where the value conferred by geographical position and prestige validates the very existence of the empire and counts more than its extent.[202] In this way, the juxtaposition of the urban paradise of Constantinople with the tumultuous province acquires further significance: the emphasis on Constantinople's preeminent position in the empire overshadows Isidore's contemporaries' attempts to establish, at least at the rhetorical-discursive level, other urban centers as major landmarks of Byzantine statehood. Whether lauding Nicaea, Sparta, Trebizond, or Thessalonike, all the contemporary Byzantine authors who praised cities conspicuously overlooked Constantinople as a valid source of civic and ethnic renewal or continuity.[203] Even authors like Theodore Metochites or Manuel Chrysoloras, who praised Constantinople, framed their eulogies in terms that suggested religious-cultural rather than political centrality.[204] With his territory-oriented approach that openly presents Constantinople as the empire's preeminent spatial unit, Isidore indicates to Emperor John VIII the necessity of reestablishing the role and the prestige of the capital city in the changing Mediterranean world.

Conclusion

Often, Byzantine panegyrics have been treated with caution on the grounds that they produce limited historical evidence of questionable value and that they display an overelaborated style, resembling modern propaganda. Yet panegyrics are rarely sheer proclamations and a focus on their propagandistic dimension produces the misleading impression that they have little to say about the world they reflected. Recent research overwhelmingly indicates that encomiastic orations served multiple purposes and were rarely limited to extolling rulers. Likewise, they were not just reflections of nostalgia for a past era, as has also been suggested,[205] but often encapsulated effective messages and original political reflection. In this paper, having taken into consideration several assumptions drawn from current space theory, I examined the use of space in an extensive late Byzantine imperial oration by Isidore of Kiev to argue that the physical environment was not just an ornamental canvas for the emperor's personality. Instead, it constituted an effective tool for configuring a new perspective of the empire and a key ingredient of rhetorical construction. By adopting a spatial perspective, Isidore engaged with an issue at the heart of late Byzantine preoccupations: to what degree was Byzantine society defined by its spatial extension? Through the mediation of his visualization process and gaze, Isidore highlighted this issue and deemed it more important than simply conceptualizing virtues. In this way, he provided his audience with a mental map of the empire and with alternative viewpoints for evaluating the regional circumstances of late Byzantium.

By adopting the *topoi* of contemporary urban ekphraseis and encomia, Isidore departed from previous models and, in a rhetorical twist, juxtaposed a lengthy urban description with the emperor's image. His combination of praise and historical information was cast in a spatial approach that contrasted a preexisting historical indeterminacy dominating in the former Byzantine

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200   Ibid., 19.

201   On how various elements can influence the formation of social or ethnic identities see W. Pohl, *Visions of Community in the Post-Roman World* (Farnham, 2012), 1–28.

202   Such representations can be found in contemporary historical texts (e.g., Doukas's *Historia Turcobyzantina*) as well as panegyrics.

203   As a matter of fact, many authors described Constantinople in negative terms, as corrupt and decrepit.

204   See above.

205   N. Radošević argued that the description of Constantinople in Isidore's encomium and in other late texts was connected to the rise in popularity of the imagery of Constantine the Great during the Palaiologan period; see "Constantine the Great in Byzantine *basilikoi logoi*," *ZRVI* 23 (1994): 20. However, the extent of the encomium's description and the references to contemporary architectural elements indicate that nostalgia is an insufficient explanation for Isidore's use of spatial representations.

realm (especially the Morea and Thessaly) with the peaceful capital city and harmonious order restored by the Palaiologan emperors Manuel II and John VIII. These contrasts generated a dynamic of *outside* and *inside* spaces, with Constantinople acquiring the dual profile of a self-sufficient city as well as a privileged place within the ecumene. The conflict-ridden space of action unveiled further features of Constantinople, which stood not only as the residence of the imperial dynasty but also as a space of protection for a community of free citizens.

By relying on the authority of the most prestigious form of public address, the imperial oration, and by re-territorializing the imperial space, Isidore's text engendered a different image of Byzantium. The oration reversed the idea of territorial loss, by that time a conspicuous reality, recalibrated the idea of imperial authority already diffused over scattered territories, and repositioned the remaining Byzantine territory as a multifaceted component of imperial ideology, a repository of values and past traditions. Space was therefore meant not only to enrich an incomplete and biased historical account but to provide a new approach to understanding the emperor's position and the transformations of Byzantium. The encomiast's view paved the way toward a less territorialized state in which power and sovereignty ceased to work according to a militant spatial orientation and increasingly relied on the soft power of symbols.

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